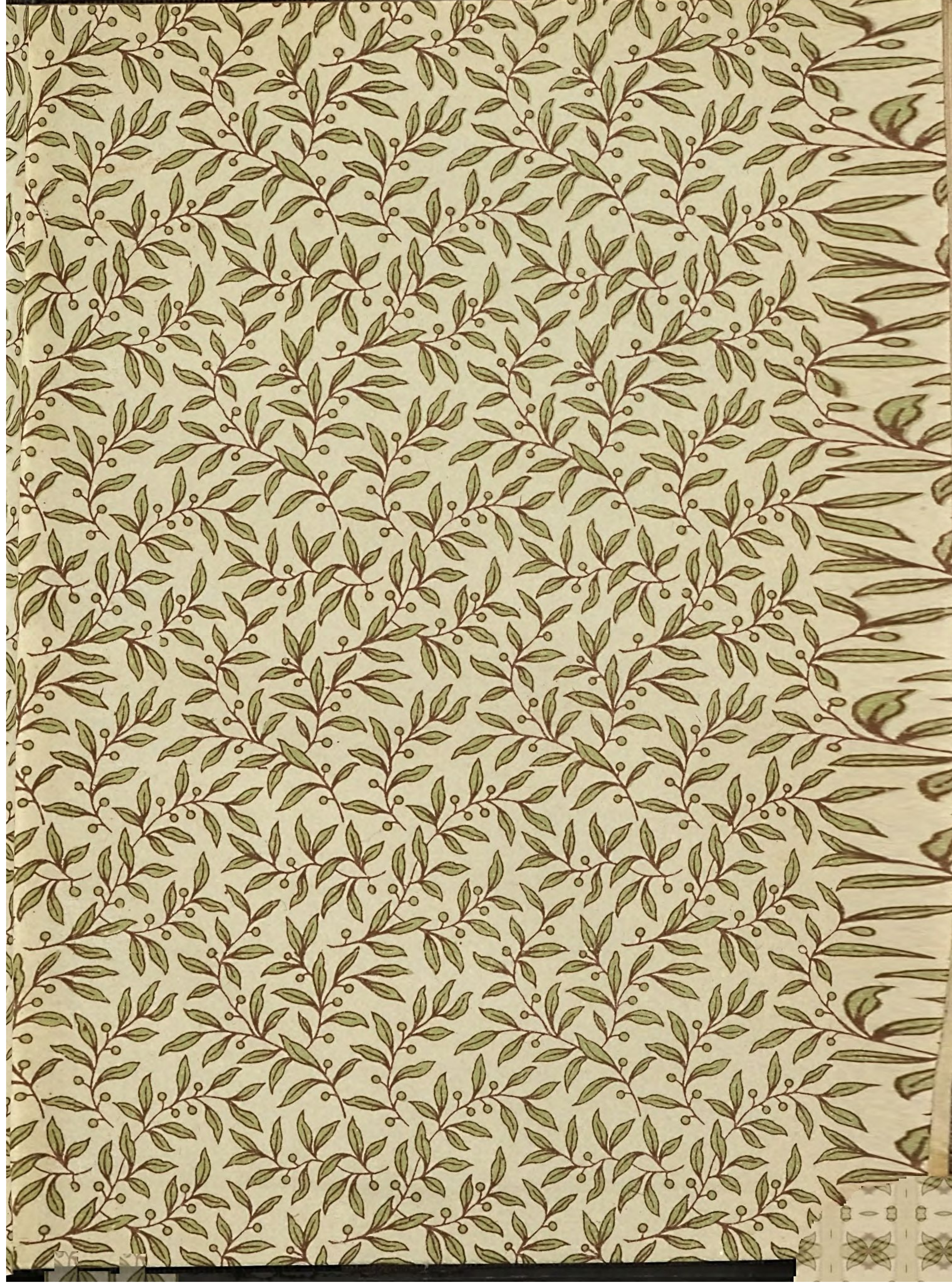








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MARGARET BY C. C. FRASER-TYTTLER.

MARGARET

BY

C C. FRASER-TYTLER

AUTHOR OF "JASMINE LEIGH"

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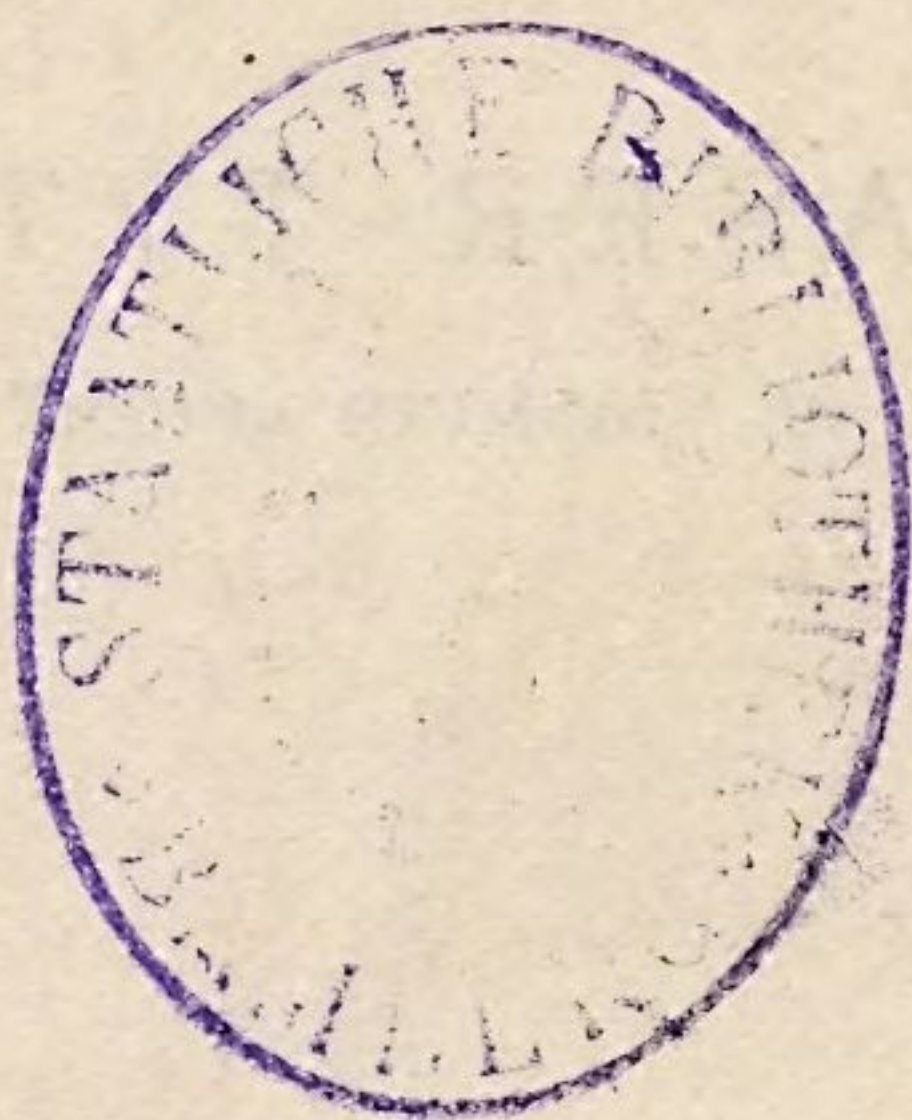
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MARGARET



BRILL

WILHELM VON BRILL

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MARGARET.

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

This is the story of one who stood and waited.

Whether she has served aright, and whom, the pages to come would wish to tell you.

If their purpose fail in part, know that the fault is in the narrative, and not in the life it speaks of. Faultless she is not, being human; weak she may be, being a woman: but the purpose of a pure life cannot fail. How should it, being most entirely one of the great purposes of God?

Sermons are preached to us week by week, and week by week we listen—and forget.

But the sermon of a holy life cannot thus pass from us.

Judging no man, condemning no man, from the majestic *silence* of the lesson comes its power.

Margaret.

Day by day to see is so much better than week by week to hear.

Sermons in stones, God's voice in the cedar-trees of Lebanon—why not in one made after His own image?

This is the life of a girl called Margaret.

CHAPTER I.

"Judge her love by her life. For our life is but love in act." —

OWEN MEREDITH.

"Then you cannot come to-day, Gaspar?"

"No, not to-day. I feel in a happy humour for this divine drudgery, and I would rather you did not talk to me just at present, Margaret — unless, of course, your business is imperative."

"I am sorry to have disturbed you," was the rejoinder. "I thought perhaps as it is the only day in the week that I can see—but it does not matter;" and, untying her bonnet strings, the girl went out softly, and as softly closed the door.

Her bedroom adjoined the sitting-room she had left, and (not unnaturally in a lodging) a door opened from one to the other. But of this entrance but little use was made; for Gaspar Marshall had expressed in the choicest of language his strong disapproval of the rush of cold air which was the inevitable though very momentary consequence of making a thoroughfare of his sanctum. He occupied, indeed, the one public room of that tiny suite of scantily-furnished apartments, and properly it was as much at the service of his

sister as himself; but possession is nine-tenths of the law, and to do Mr. Marshall justice, we must admit that when it did not in any way incommode him, he was willing to cede to his sister a small portion at least of his supreme right and territory, and on a few rare occasions a comfortable arm-chair.

Margaret made a slight *détour* to reach her room.

It was a keen January day; the air, though still, was grey; and the sun had not even attempted its frequent struggle with the London smoke and the English atmosphere of winter in a town. The few unhappy foreigners who reared pale and melancholy faces out of English great-coats and English comforters, and who crept out by gaslight, to be driven in by snow or fog, had long ceased to hope for anything but this "vilain temps." Madame de Staël, indeed, had said, "Répondez, étrangers—la nature est-elle chez vous belle et bienfaisante?" But her compatriots, or the natives of even more favoured climes, who saw London (as Margaret did from her window), and for the first time, had never been guilty of repeating the question.

A thin and iron-mould stained blind was drawn half over the one window of which I speak. This the owner of the room hastily drew up, and lifting an easel with some difficulty into the recess, she threw her bonnet on the bed, and sat herself down before a half-finished sketch.

Her look was not that of a happy woman settling to a busy day's work; rather did she wear a somewhat distressed and anxious expression,

as, leaning back in her chair and unbuttoning a pair of very worn and rubbed kid gloves, she kept her eyes and her mind fixedly on the board before her.

Small hands, and very white they were, to be clothed so poorly; but there are little hands that can do great things, and a mean covering has sometimes held a great spirit. These little hands seemed to wield a very effective pencil, and, with a sigh, she disemburdened herself of a large share of her anxieties, whatever those might be. In a quarter of an hour's time she was fully as engrossed as she had found her brother.

Presently there was a pause. She laid down the pencil, held up the board, and surveyed it carefully; her head a little on one side, the arched eyebrows raised, half critically, half wearily. "I think it will do," she said, replacing it on the easel.

"It will do." Poor words, with which we have so often to satisfy ourselves. Not, "It is right," or, "I am content," only, "It will *do*." I suppose the words will be said until time is over—till we can awake up in God's likeness, and be satisfied with that.

The paint-box lay beyond Margaret's reach as she sat there; to reach it she must move the easel and her chair. Then there was a piece of drapery needed; only a very little bit, for it was the portrait of a man at which she worked. But suppose the lines should be wrong? Yes, she had better have a copy. And Gaspar had wished there should be something over the left shoulder. A flannel dressing-gown hung over a chair an-

swered the purpose capitally; and she was not going to copy the faded colour or the threadbare sleeve. Gaspar Marshall was to have a deep crimson fold across his portrait, and across the portrait's heart. He would have liked a purple better, I think—purple is suggestive of kingly blood and of laurels, and neither of these does he despise.

Margaret was a wise girl, but I think she was foolish enough really to believe and to think as she arranged the flannel folds that no crimson and no purple were too good for Gaspar. If he were appreciated—if his great talents were only developed and made known! Ah, when would that be—when?

“Do you mind making a little less noise?” called a voice from the next room. “Can’t you have wheels put on your furniture, Margaret? or, at least, lay down a soft pile carpet?”

We cannot control our thoughts, and for an instant Margaret said to herself that her brother was not exactly very practical, in his suggestions especially. “A soft pile carpet!”—she unconsciously fingered the thin cloak she had not discarded when the bonnet was laid aside, and the few shillings she had put away for the week’s expenditure danced before her mind’s eye. Practical—no, Gaspar was hardly that; but what great man ever was practical? at least, what man like Gaspar, with talents such as Gaspar had?

What would the article be like? When should she see it in print? Would Gaspar remember that Elspet’s wages had been a month due, and that the ten pounds he could earn by the few strokes

of his ready pen would just pay them? She could not remind him of this, she knew; it was bad enough to hoard and pinch and save herself, without dragging him down to the same level and hardening him with the same cares. And would he write at all if he knew he were paying "*wages*?" I do not think genius would commonly be stimulated by such a knowledge, and it certainly would not move Gaspar into activity. So Margaret thought.

The paints were by this time on the palette, and the few first touches had been put in. It was just as well she had not gone to Mr. Pickering's after all; she did not know that he could have helped her very materially; perhaps she would only have come home disgusted, as she had so often done before; disgusted with herself, her work, with everything but the great art itself—sunk even below the "it will do" state of mind, very nearly despairing. Then what a long morning's work she would have missed.

"Margaret!"—there was a knock at the door, and it opened slightly. "Good gracious, my dear girl! Come in here and speak to me. Make haste, my room is getting so cold; can't breathe this atmosphere—conglomerate of frost and turpentine."

She rose and went to him immediately.

"I can go now to Pickering's. Get on your things, will you?"

"I suppose next Tuesday would not do so well, Gaspar? because—"

"No; I shall not be here next week in all probability. I have a new plan *en train*—a literary

speculation, in fact. Come, I can unfold it to you as we go along, that is, if I am in the humour and can remember it. Not a match here!" (taking out a cigar). "Get on your things, will you? What does that woman do all day?"

What does that woman not do, rather? At this moment she is cleaning master's Parisian boots. "With milk, remember," had been his orders. "I won't have blacking put on them." And there is so very little milk in the house to-day.

"There ain't so much as 'll do your cup o' tea, miss!" Elspet had expostulated to Margaret. "Won't I get a drop in more?"

"No, no; never mind, Elspet. I have taken it black before now, and I can't have my accounts put out by extra supplies, remember!" And a smile had followed on the light words.

Old Elspet shook her head and rubbed the backs of her hands against each other, and groped in a fathomless pocket for a stray copper of her own. It was not there, as it happened, but in the kitchen-table drawer, and that answered the purpose quite as well.

But whether it ever reaches the milkman, and whether Margaret has her "black tea" or not, only Elspet will know, for Gaspar Marshall never dines at home. It is an old established rule now, and Margaret is the last person to protest. Elspet is no great cook, and her dinners had never pleased her master. Then of course tea 'was not to be thought of; who ever heard of a genius taking tea?

"Only God can satisfy a woman," says a writer of our day.

When He shows Himself twofold to us, giving a human love to satisfy the human in us, besides a divine to satisfy the divine, how content we women ought to be!

Some souls I suppose there are, or have been, who, leaning upon God, have little need of earthly comfort, or stoop to it merely, from above.

But to the weak among us I think He gives a footstool whereby to reach the Love Divine.

CHAPTER II.

“Warum will sich Geschmack und Genie so selten vereinen?”

SCHILLER.

“Walk in, sir; walk in, if you please!” was Mr. Pickering’s greeting, as, after half an hour’s walk and a long climb up a dark staircase, Margaret and her brother reached his studio door. “No objection to smoke, miss, I hope? We was having a bit o’ baccy this cold morning. The lady Mrs. Armytage and Mr. Carew mentioned, I think? Very happy to make your acquaintance, miss, I’m sure; and your brother?—to you the same, sir!”—and the artist held out a large and not over-clean hand fresh from the mysteries of a besmeared painting rag.

Margaret returned the proffered shake, but her brother with evident reluctance gave the first two fingers of his well-gloved hand, and robbed

the act of whatever grace it might have boasted by a distant bow.

Mr. Pickering raised a pair of sharp brown eyes, shaded by coarse and bushy brows, and scanned his visitors over the top of his spectacles.

"It's you, I think, miss," he said, "that was so good as to wish to see me? Most happy, I'm sure, if I can be of any service—have a fellow-feeling, I have, for all my brothers and sisters, miss, in art and misfortune." (Here Mr. Pickering burst into a loud laugh.) "No child's play—is it, miss?"

'Does the road wind uphill all the way?

Yes, to the very end.

Will the day's journey take the whole long day?

From morn to night, my friend.'

So sings a lady-poet, miss, of our day, and what she sings I applies to art—art of dabbling especially. We're in the same boat, I think, miss? Heads and figures in your line? Now, what'll you give to see Sappho? she's a girl now that'll break more hearts than any in England! Come into her boudoir—receives to-day, she does, a few favoured friends. Walk in, sir! walk in, if you please—I'm no house-painter, sir" (he saw that Mr. Marshall stepped gingerly past the many wet canvases that were laid against the wall)—"you'll find no varnish, or nothing on the door as you pass through. No, no; the 'human form divine'—that's my line." And he flattened such human form as he had been endowed with against

the panel, to let his visitors pass into the adjoining room.

Sappho was depicted as a woman of large, almost masculine proportions, seated in a low chair, in which she reclined in a posture of marvellous ease and beauty. A scroll was in her hand and lay half unrolled across her knees, and the drapery about her figure hung in rich, soft folds. But, without doubt, the chief beauty of the picture lay in the expression of the eyes: such a full, contemplative, half-tender, half-commanding look shone through them, such dignity without assumption, such superiority unmarred by consciousness.

"Very fine," said Gaspar, coldly. Mr. Pickering tapped his pipe against a frame, over a little pile of accumulated ashes. Margaret did not speak.

"Been at Rome, miss? Been at Rome sir?" Gaspar shook his head.

"Ah! well, you haven't lived half your life yet, and what's more, you haven't eaten half your cake. When you go to those parts you'll probably see a place known to some few learned folk as the Vatican" (Mr. Pickering laughed loudly, and Gaspar Marshall turned impatiently on his heel to some sketches on the wall); "and if you'll step into the Hall of the Muses in that same building, which is, by the way, a thought larger than this house, you know—four thousand four hundred and twenty-four rooms, that's all—and two hundred-odd staircases to get to 'em by,—that's about it: well, if you'll step in there you'll find (if you're lucky and open your eyes wide)

a Sappho that was parent, so to speak, of mine here. Not alike in every particular, you know—but the same idea.”

“But the eyes,” said Margaret, “you have not taken those from the statue?”

“Not altogether; because, as I presume you know, miss, in the best sculpture the eyeballs are mostly left round and fine, without marking of pupil or anything else. And when you’ve seen a deal of specimens, you’ll find for yourself that this is less displeasing (vacant, as you may fancy it would be) than the attempt at representation with the chisel. It is in the eyes that we painters have the advantage over sculptors. And now I think we’ve stared this poor lady of Greece out of countenance. Look at some landscapes? They’re not much in my line, but find a smart sale, and that’s the great thing after all,” he added, looking keenly into Margaret’s perplexed face, and smiling. “What would Mrs. P. say, I wonder, if I didn’t bring her her twenty-five to thirty pounds a day? Shakespeare says——”

“I fear we must be moving on now, Margaret,” broke in Mr. Marshall. “I am sure, sir, my sister is obliged to you for the kind trouble you have taken on her behalf.”

“*Trouble*, sir! Are you a Saturday Reviewer? Help her! I’ve done nothing more than show her another pretty woman like herself. Where do you stop, miss? If I can step in and be of any use at any time——”

“We shall not be at home for some little time to come, I fear,” broke in Gaspar again.

At the “we” a little colour mounted into Mar-

garet's face. She was very sensitive about the exact truth, especially from the lips of Gaspar. She said nothing, however. Mr. Marshall bowed a cold farewell, while she again held out her hand. A woman's instinct told her that the man, coarse and eccentric as he might appear, was not ignoble. When they found themselves on the dark staircase, feeling more than seeing their way down,

"Pray, Margaret," said Gaspar, in an injured tone, "whom have you to thank for so select an introduction?"

"He is very coarse and rough, certainly," said Margaret; "but the Sappho, Gaspar! What an artist he is! He will be able to help me, too. Did you hear what he makes a day?" Then, with a gulp, "Did you finish the article, Gaspar?"

"No, not yet."

"But they wanted it at latest to-day, they said; the February number comes out directly."

Mr. Marshall stepped out of the mud on to the pavement, and gave the least touch of adjustment to his tie.

"I am no penny-a-liner, Margaret, thank heaven! I cannot quite look upon things in the same light as you. It had certainly escaped my memory that this was the day; but had I remembered it, it would probably have made but little difference. I was engaged on other work this morning more congenial to my tastes. I cannot demean myself by writing to order."

"But you had made an agreement, had you not, to supply an article each month?" It occurred to Margaret that what there was of degra-

dation in the matter, if such existed, must have lain in the making of that agreement, and not in the punctual fulfilment of it.

Gaspar was clever enough to divine her meaning, but he evaded a direct reply.

"I have almost decided to throw up all my engagements at home, and to go abroad at once. A sphere is what I want. The intellectual capacity is there, I know, but will you tell me where is Inspiration in this country? Where is repose for a cultured mind in this quibbling, fighting, restless place? I will be bound by no trammels; my spirit must be unfettered if it is to soar."

For a time they walked on in silence; then Margaret said.

"The hard thing, Gaspar, is to soar to any height while we must always return to earth for the crumbs we live by. It for ever weighs upon me that our poverty is the great burden that bows down your genius; that is the worst trammel that binds you. While you are looking for other spheres and grander themes, you will lose your hold of the only means you have of living. Dear Gaspar, I would do anything for you; that is why I wanted Mr. Pickering's help. I think I may do something still, though I have none of your genius." And the eager tears started into her large eyes.

Gaspar was touched. He laid his hand upon his sister's arm, and said more kindly, because smiling,

"You are of the earth earthy, my dear girl! You are always wasting yourself on trifling cares. I feel the desire for better things: the power is

within me. I cannot sacrifice my fame, our future, our everything, to the sordid calls of to-day. I have not time to tell you more now; you can go home alone from here, can you not? I will speak to you when my plan is riper. An ode to a sooty sparrow, forsooth! a description of the brawling of rain in a gutter! Suggestive subjects, eh, Margaret?"

They parted at a crossing, the brother with steps quickened by the new scheme that filled his soul; the sister more slowly, and with a troubled face, making her way to the cheerless home so soon to be more dreary still. For Margaret would not go abroad with her brother: he had many friends of whom she knew nothing; and it would not be the first time she had been left alone. It would be a long absence, however, and how would it end for Gaspar? For herself she had but little thought, beyond the knowledge that she should sadly miss what she dearly loved. Gaspar had "trammels" enough already—had he not spoken of them to-day? Besides, a genius on a quest for inspiration never takes a sister with him. She could only act housekeeper after all, and geniuses need no housekeeping. If the dinners at home are bad, they just dine out.

Margaret watched her brother till the mist that had begun to creep over the city hid him from her sight. Then she fell to thinking of his words, of Sappho, and of Mr. Pickering; and not being a genius of the most approved pattern, she was able at the same time to remember to pick up her dress.

"I am of the earth earthy," she said to herself;

"but that is no reason my skirt should be the same."

Gaspar Marshall, cannot you learn the lesson her face teaches you, as she hears you speak so unconcernedly words that are messengers of ill-tidings to her, without a sigh, a murmur, without even one distressed look?

You will never learn till you have found her secret; till you look elsewhere for the directing finger; till you hear a voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it!"

Perhaps you hear no voice. That well may be. The voice comes after the secret, not before.

CHAPTER III.

"Chaque chose est vraie en partie, et fausse en partie. Nous n'avons ni vrai ni bien qu'en partie, et mêlé de mal et de faux."— PASCAL.

Surprise or vexation at the idea of her brother's possible absence and impracticable scheme was not, however, the paramount cause of the troubled expression which (immediately that he had turned his back) came upon Margaret Marshall's face.

To her any scheme of Gaspar's did not appear impracticable, though she told herself that as great men had failed before, so might it be the will of God that Gaspar should fail now. Then she was still young, and so hopeful; and, after all, had he not said the plan was not fully ripe? Many green plans had fallen already, never to come to fruition, and Margaret had received them

in her lap patiently and willingly, disappointed at first that they should have attained to no greater perfection, but still raising hopeful eyes for that one which should. Rosy apples are better than green, thought she, but green ones prove that the tree can bear.

But, it may be asked, had this woman, with her implicit faith in God, her patience in all things, because that in all things she saw His hand—had she found no lack in Gaspar? no unsoundness at the core of this life that was lived before her and at her side?

To this I say, that in despite of herself such thoughts *had* crossed her mind. But very rarely; for the same faith that was toward God descended like a mantle upon men. She believed in truth until she found a lie.

And, lest her faith in this matter should by daily contact be weakened, was there not her love to bind and blind her? She had that love “whose love includes all loves;” was it strange that it cast its halo around one that was not worthy?

“Too wholly pure to dream untruth” in aught, she was, moreover, too humble far to judge. Did Gaspar know her inmost soul, her struggles, her prayers, her temptations? How should she know his? To him, therefore, her trouble of to-day could not wholly be attributed.

That morning’s visit to Mr. Pickering’s studio had given a death-blow to one of the strongest articles of her faith.

Have we not all experienced a similar discomfiture when some preconceived and deeply-rooted notion has received a violent shock? when we

look into our mind and find it in a turmoil because the firmest of its convictions has been proved a lie? We have such boundless faith in our own "convictions;" we are so ready to judge and to condemn by them; and when we have boundless faith, the wrench, when it comes, must be all the more severe.

Margaret's strongest conviction, next to her belief in Gaspar (and always excepting her faith, which reigned supreme, and influenced every action of her life), was that great genius must to some extent be accompanied by and inseparable from refinement. Joshua Pickering's pictures had seemed to her to speak from the soul of a great man. They had been, for many years back, the delight of her eyes; in the wildest flights of her ambition she had never soared above the level of that to which Mr. Pickering had attained. Landscapes, figures, conception, execution, what living artist could excel him? And no mere girl's fancy was this; or, at least, if it was so it was shared by middle-aged men and grey-headed artists. They proved their admiration, it is true, in different ways: for Mr. Pickering excited necessarily as much envy as admiration. His pictures could not be kept out of the Academy indeed; but the man of all others who should have himself been received into the magic circle, made it his special boast that never should he be able to add the R. A. after his well-known name. It mattered but little, truly; Joshua Pickering would have gained nothing by it himself, and the withholding of the prize when it should have been bestowed detracted not a little from the glory

and good name of his enemies. The world had ceased to ask why so great genius was left unacknowledged, because all the world knew the answer. It was no wonder then that Margaret's first interview with the great man of her imagination and admiration should have been more than disappointing. The fruit of his genius rose multiform before her; the jasper sunsets, the rosy sunrise, the dawn at sea, the Niobe that all the world had marvelled at, beauty in all her sorrow, and sorrow in every line of beauty. The Sappho she had seen to-day! And such pictures had emanated from such a soul! Had he a soul?

Nor was it only the art to which he particularly addicted himself (Margaret could find no word save addicted that would not be wronged by application to Mr. Pickering) that seemed to come to him by nature. Had he not quoted aptly? Had not Mr. Armytage told Margaret that he was no poor performer on the violin, the piano, and the organ? And had it not been apparent all through that he cared for none of these?

There are, perhaps, few things more conflicting than instances of this kind. Genius without taste, cultivation without refinement, divine gifts conferred upon satyrs. I can find nothing at all analogous to it in nature, or otherwise. It is enough to know that what Margaret encountered is not an impossible, though happily an unusual case. We come sometimes upon one endowed with the noblest gifts, the highest powers that are known to man, to whom, as far as we can see, neither opportunity, circumstance, nor education has been adverse, and who yet remains

untouched, unpurified by the divine flame. It would seem as if it were possible that gifts and powers can be held wholly apart from, and in no way affecting, the holder. That great genius and littleness of mind are compatible is a truth (disagreeable enough) that has been forced upon us by history and by experience; but it seems more unaccountable by far, that great genius and extreme coarseness of manner, of life, and of outward appearance should meet in one being: we can reconcile in some measure to our reasoning faculties the fact that genius (cultivated) may create a refinement which shall be intellectual only, that is, affecting the mind, the tastes, and habits, but not the actual or spiritual life; but that genius (cultivated) should bring with it *no* refinement is more difficult of digestion. The difficulty, however, cannot make us doubt the too apparent fact.

Such were Margaret's meditations, when they were brought abruptly to a close by her encounter with Elspet not a yard from their own door. The good woman looked a little put out, or more technically, put *about*.

"Where are you going, Elspet?" asked her mistress.

"To see my cousin that has the toothache, my dear; I'll be back presently."

Elspet had a mythical cousin, who had served her many a good turn. "She never comes to see you, does she?" Margaret had once said, laughing; but no blush of shame had come to Elspet's withered cheek.

"Poor dear heart of her!" said she, as she

shuffled down a by-street, making straight for the milkman's to order the forbidden supply. "Poor dear heart of her! The Lord knows I don't tell no useless lies; not except just to keep her mind easy."

The fire had been kept up in the sitting-room, and Margaret's frugal dinner awaited her on the fender. The cold morning's walk had made her more hungry than was usual, and she lifted the plates with some satisfaction on to the table. Her appetite was not sharpened, however, by the discovery of a letter upon the table. It was addressed to her brother, and bore the name of the magazine he the most regularly supplied.

What could it be? Had they written to say they would not trouble him further? It was nothing more than she expected, for this was the latest day allowed him, and there lay the unfinished manuscript upon the table.

Poor Gaspar! it was hard for him to have to write regularly, but still harder for him would it be to lack the gains a little exertion would have insured.

Margaret lifted her easel and canvas from the next room, and sat down to make use of the hour of daylight that remained.

She was hardly even so hopeful as she had been in the morning. Art seemed to her to have lost a little of its divinity.

Mr. Pickering's words were more vivid still than the face of Sappho—

"What would Mrs. P. say if I didn't bring her her twenty-five to thirty pounds a day?"

Perhaps the problem will be solved. At least

I think that Margaret may trust her instinct rather than the judgment of her taste. That instinct, I mean, which whispered to her that Mr. Pickering was not merely what he seemed.

It is not every woman, nor every man either, that can discern the lustre of the diamond in the dull uncut stone and beneath the rough surface.

But if it is to go by guesswork—and what guesswork is better than instinct?—I think the woman will, in most cases, have the advantage.

CHAPTER IV.

“Il y a des ménagements que l’esprit même et l’usage du monde n’apprennent pas, et sans manquer à la plus parfaite politesse on blesse souvent le cœur.”—

MADAME DE STAËL.

The dull afternoon quickly waned, and shades crept closer and thicker over Margaret’s easel. They had reached the fold across Gaspar’s heart; they had strayed into his red-brown beard. The artist had had no need to improve on nature; the life-like head portrayed a more than usually handsome man.

Margaret had for some moments laid by her brush; she was watching the effect of the fast passing light on the different parts of her picture. Now that the shadow touched the beard, she rose hastily, and, pushing back her chair, turned to the fire she had quite neglected.

Women have strange fancies, imaginative women especially; and Margaret had the gift and its

consequences in large share, though she might be of the earth, earthy. At this moment her fancy was to avoid seeing the evening shadows pass over Gaspar's painted face.

I suppose men are not troubled by such whims, but a woman (if she be alone especially) is haunted by them perpetually, and at every turn. Is it the weakness of a weaker mind, or is it the life that is by circumstances so often forced upon her? Left at home to brood over little troubles, seeing small things *near*, and so believing them to be large, is it strange that she should not shake off all that is in the eyes of men absurd and unreasonable? I think, too, that with women, as with children, imagination takes the lead. Reason asserts its claim, to be sure (unless they are very foolish women), but what child that is naturally nervous can be reasoned out of a fear of the dark? Imagination has peopled the silence and the darkness with eyrie forms, and reason has no power to drive them forth.

These whims are, let it be said, generally but momentary. Margaret poked the fire, went to her brother's room to do the same kind office there, and left the easel and the picture to be devoured by shadows.

When she returned to the sitting-room she took a match from the bundle on the mantelpiece, so as to be in readiness when Gaspar's footstep should be heard on the stairs. She was too weary to read or work; the cheerful crackle of the fire and the dark stillness of the remainder of the room were very grateful to her; and then the saving of gas was a consideration. Gaspar

was in the habit of returning home for a cup of tea or coffee, and to dress for dinner in the not uncommon event of his being asked to dine with friends, or at a friend's house.

Margaret had not long enjoyed the fire and quiet when the familiar footstep was heard. Almost at the same instant she rang the bell, and lighted the gas. But Gaspar came upstairs with unusual speed, and he was in the room before she could throw away the match.

"Look out, Margaret!" he said, excitedly (and Gaspar is seldom excited), "a friend has come in with me. Your hair is not very—and you have paint on your hands—you don't mind just going to your room, I suppose? He will not stay long."

Margaret left the door open behind her, and a stream of light enabled her to see her way to a chair; it would hardly do to move till the visitor was gone, now that she had made what seemed to her a rather unnecessary flight. But scarcely was she seated when the door was closed, and she was left in darkness.

Five minutes seemed a long time in that cold dark room; ten minutes like an hour; when twenty had passed she groped her way to the bed, and wrapping herself in her cloak, drew her chair close beside it and laid her head on the pillow. If there had been light there, it would have fallen on a subject for a better picture than Mr. Pickering had ever painted: a pale face, a wealth of heavy brown hair, not—as Gaspar had suggested—very tidy, but all the more picturesque for that, on closed eyelids very like marble, and lashes that would have been more beautiful had

they not been bedewed, and so a little displaced.

Poor eyes! they would have been fuller, and poor cheeks, you would be paler or more flushed if the pillow and the closed door had not been merciful to you, and closed the ears, half hidden in the hair, from learning the smallness of one you hold so great.

"Nice room, Marshall; very artistic! By Jove! But I'd no idea you painted. Where's the end to your accomplishments?"

"Seen the last number of the *Contemporary*? Some good things in it."

"But I want to look at this head, if you please. Charming room, I declare, Marshall!"

"Good enough for bachelor's quarters," replied Gaspar in an off-hand tone trying to turn his friend from the subject of the portrait. But he was not to be foiled, the canvas was lifted and brought to the light.

"By Jove!" said his friend. "Well, I never! Awfully hard, isn't it, to draw one's self like that? But you have it to a T, I declare! Uncommonly grand! You're a born genius. Wish I had some of your talent, Marshall—haven't even a good eye for a horse! Well, now I must be off. I shall look you up again in this jolly den. And so you cannot dine with us on Tuesday?"

When Margaret re-entered the room her brother was reading his letter. He threw it into the fire with a smile.

"You have heard from the Editor, Gaspar?"

"From Lewis," he said. "I am going abroad to-morrow, so *that* business is settled."

The note that was curling itself thin and red-hot on the coals had been as follows:—

“Sir,— This being the last day our February number can remain open, I have been obliged, in default of your promised article, to supply another. According to the terms of our agreement, this irregularity cancels it, and we shall not again trouble you to furnish us with papers.—I am, sir,” &c.

Margaret guessed the purport of the letter from her brother’s manner more than from his words.

“Then you really are off to-morrow?” she inquired.

“Yes; and get that woman to see that my things are all right. She must pack, too, some parcels from my tailor, which will come to-night. I must be off now, but I will see you to-morrow. Send some tea into my room. Sit down by the fire, won’t you? Poor girl, how you shiver! I hope you’ll come in another day, and see young Good-fellow—you would not care for him though, he’s an astounding ass. I thought he would only bore you.”

So saying, he took his candle and went to dress; and Margaret rang the bell to give orders about the tailor’s parcels. As to Gaspar’s present wardrobe, she superintended that herself; and an hour later the room was strewn with stockings and shirts. Twenty-eight pairs of boots—he could hardly need them all; she must ask in the morning which were to be packed.

By the same hour on the succeeding day (with his boots and the tailor’s parcels) a genius had left London.

The great city, however, took but little notice of the facts. Mr. Lewis, in the publisher's office, was shaking hands with Gaspar's literary successor; while the sun set, the muffin-boy called, and the shadows crept as yesterday.

Only in one room of one poor lodging the lack was felt. No footstep on the stair to-night; no tea to prepare; no answer, kind or impatient, to break the silence.

But Margaret was very patient: it is a lesson that women mostly learn.

CHAPTER V.

"The enemy of art is the enemy of nature. Art is nothing but the highest sagacity and exertion of human nature; and what nature will he honour who honours not the human?"—LAVATER.

The portrait, though so nearly finished, must now be at a stand-still. When would it be completed? thought Margaret, as she laid it away.

She worked busily, however, at other subjects; her ambition being to produce something worthy of exhibition and of sale.

Not that she was careless for the art itself; her love for it increased day by day as she worked. But was it unnatural that she should be desirous of adding to the scanty allowance upon which she and Gaspar and old Elspet lived? And now that he had gone from her, was there less ground for this desire? I think not. The very uncertainty

which must attend such a scheme and its issue was an incentive to her industry.

And is it not the mission of poets—I use the word in its widest sense, not speaking only of a maker of verses—of true souls, to elevate other souls? And if they are to be elevated, how else than by first administering to the body? Was Gaspar to be great and good while poverty kept him in the dust? Was Elspet to be taught truth-telling when economy, that verged on meanness, and a thousand consequent temptations, pervaded the very atmosphere around her? So Margaret's thirst for pecuniary remuneration for her work was not so soulless and low as it may appear.

One picture was almost ready, at least for criticism. An interview with Mr. Pickering Margaret could not help shrinking from; yet how else should she find her way to the public eye and notice? A chance, as it appeared to be (but what is chance?) made the way plain.

Going out with Elspet for half an hour's shopping, Margaret came (as is so often the case) upon the one person in London to whom she might have applied the name of *friend*. It was very pleasant to see that bright, cheery face, to hear the refined, crisp accents, after Elspet's broad dialect; yet when they met, Margaret had not felt wholly pleased.

Mrs. Armytage, with a warm heart, had a quick temper; and then, of all people in the world, she least of all seemed to appreciate Gaspar. Would she ask for him? And hearing of his whereabouts, would she approve his absence?

‘Dear girl,’ said Mrs. Armytage, taking hold of both of Margaret’s hands, and looking very much as if she would have liked to kiss her. ‘Dear girl! what an age it is since I have seen you!’

‘It is a long time,’ said Margaret, for lack of something better to say.

They then walked down the street together, Elspet keeping a steady pace behind, and making a mental memorandum of the cut of Mrs. Armytage’s cloak.

‘I have meant to come to you every day this month, Margaret; but now that I am alone I find it hard to move about. I only walked so far this morning because I was obliged. And now I am so glad because I have seen you. Dear Margaret, you are looking a little better than when I saw you last, I think. What have you been doing, and where is your brother?’

‘I have been painting, Mrs. Armytage.’

‘But where is your brother?’ reiterated that little lady impatiently, almost imperiously.

The truth had to be told; and a quiet ‘humph!’ was the reply.

It was soon settled that they should go together to Mr. Pickering’s, and that Mrs. Armytage should broach the subject of exhibition, or of some means of disposing of Margaret’s pictures. When they parted, her friend pressed her to change her mind about going home, and to come and spend the remainder of the day with her—‘Or I will send the brougham for you this afternoon—come, Margaret, do! it will be very dull. Luke is away, you know, and I am off to

the country on Wednesday, so the house does not even look *pretty*, but if you will come, dear—”

Margaret could not spare the time; if she was to go to-morrow to Mr. Pickering's, she must finish her picture.

“But I am sorry you are going away, Mrs. Armytage,” she said.

“But, my dear, I don't like London in Lent, or rather Lent in London. I am going to Bournemouth for six weeks. I shall leave a room ready for Luke though, in case he comes up to town. And I will tell him to come and see you, Margaret—”

“Oh, thank you; but I don't know—”

“I forgot; I suppose it would not do—well, I shall be back soon, and then you must come and stay with us for a good *long* visit.”

So they parted. And next day they found themselves at Mr. Pickering's.

“Walk in, ladies!” he cried lustily; and then the half apology for smoking was repeated.

He criticised Margaret's picture, a study of a girl's head, pretty severely. But it was evident that it pleased him not a little.

“Goodish bit of talent, and *no* mistake!” he said; “you'll be making a noise yet, miss, and, what's more to the point, a handsome living.” Then he advised her to try the subject again, treating it in a different way. “And look at yourself a bit, miss, while you're doing it!” he added, laughing heartily.

“We disturbed you in an inexcusable way, Mr. Pickering, at *your* lovely picture,” said Mrs. Armytage, stooping, with a raised eyeglass, over his easel.

"Disturb! dear no, madam—only making a few pot-boilers, you see! Had two orders for that this morning. Says I, 'Bother your orders! I'll do ten new subjects, but never a copy.'"

"Where is this, Mr. Pickering?"

"Coast of Cornwall—goodish bit of stuff, ain't it? But this is only second to t'other one, taken near the same spot. Poetical subject, miss—perhaps you're acquainted with it?"

Enoch Arden was the subject; and the man who painted the picture had surely loved the poem.

"Not so good, is it?" he said, and his words jarred upon Margaret, who had forgotten for a time the artist in his picture. "Not so good, the first one, I mean, as this? So the first one he says to me,—

'I am content,' he answer'd, 'to be lov'd
A little after Enoch.'

That's what he says. Wish other folks was so obliging, miss—wish they'd be so easy pleased, that's all."

"'Heaven made him,'" said Margaret to herself, catching from Mr. Pickering the infection of quoting, "'and therefore let him pass for a man!'"

When she reached home she sat down and wrote a long letter to Gaspar; there was also one to be enclosed, and it was with some regret that she sent it away unopened. For one near-belonging had these two in India—a brother who had been married and settled there for ten years past: the letter was addressed by him and he

was no frequent correspondent. Margaret would have liked to hear poor James was well.

But to open a letter to Gaspar was a thing not to be thought of. It was enclosed, and the budget addressed as he had directed,—“Poste Restante, Paris.”

After which Margaret had some tea, and fell to work re-sketching the girl's head, and in a different position.

Then, as she sat silently before her easel, the active mind wandered again and again to the pictures and the artist she had seen that day.

Then for the first time it occurred to her what might be (I do not say what *was*) the refining influence that Mr. Pickering lacked.

She did not use to herself the word “religion,” nor the common phrases about “conversion” and the like. To her the influence had never clothed itself in similar forms. She could not look upon it as a sudden gift of something from above to man, but rather as an opening of man's eyes to a changeless, majestic, all-absorbing truth. To those still blinded she longed to speak of what she felt and knew that she could see; and yet the sacredness of the revelation would often make her dumb.

What use to say, when all the world harangued of “chance,” and “luck,” and “accident,” and “misfortune,” there is no luck and no misfortune? God is above everything; if you will love Him, He will teach you His secrets.

What use for a young girl to oppose the practical faithlessness that so often accompanies a theoretic faith?

What use indeed, thought Margaret, to show what only God Himself can teach?

"Oh, Gaspar, my darling brother!" she sighed, "if *you* don't know, He will teach you some day. We must wait for His own good time."

And in the meantime, God being a living God to her, she could pray.

CHAPTER VI.

"Art is much, but love is more.
O Art, my Art, thou'rt much, but love is more!
Art symbolizes heaven, but Love is God,
And makes heaven."—

ELIZABETH BARRET-BROWNING.

Many days passed each other in slow, even, monotonous procession.

The weather continued miserable as before, and the days seemed hardly as yet to have sensibly lengthened.

An hour and a half's painting after her early dinner was the most that Margaret could accomplish. But the "Girl's Head" had been put into Mr. Pickering's hands, and its fate, together with the hope of a letter from Gaspar, gave to her changeless life a colouring, and to her energy a stimulus. How we go chasing hope from day to day! and how often, like a will-o'-the-wisp, it keeps its even dance before us, never nearer, never reached, but still holding out its alluring beacon, and still drawing us on! Children after butterflies are not more eager; children after

Margaret.

butterflies are not more easily turned aside to follow some gaudier creature of larger wings.

Mrs. Armytage had left town; Elspet was now Margaret's only companion. In the long evenings the good woman would bring her work, and, sure of a welcome, seat herself on a low stool by her mistress's side. The familiarity of her conversation belied the humility of her position, yet she always stoutly refused to take a chair.

Presently an evening came when Elspet had to devote herself to washing instead of to Margaret, and the latter was left alone. She had worked very hard all day: besides the usual amount of painting, there had been the small weekly accounts to be made up; now with the darkness a reaction had come on, all the stronger for the ray of gladness and of hope that that day's post had brought. No letter from Gaspar; no cheque from Mr. Pickering; but a copy of the *Times* with a favourable notice of the "Girl's Head." Margaret had not even heard that it had been exhibited; now she saw it in the long column devoted to the Society of Female Artists, and her heart leapt.

"Miss Marshall's study of a 'Girl's Head' is a striking contrast to its neighbour. The natural, and yet by no means facile pose of the head does the artist great credit. The touch of a young artist, and some of the crudeness consequent on that fact, are indeed apparent. But we shall be surprised if Miss Marshall does not before long outdo the ordinary run of female artists."

Margaret covered her face with her hands

when the precious *Times* had been twice read. To us it matters little what at that moment passed through her mind: those who think that there is a divine hand interposing in the most trivial matters of our daily life will understand: those who say "I believe in God" once a week, but drop the belief on week-days, or make a God after their own devising, who enters not at all into all their thoughts—these would laugh were I to tell them more—and I do not want Margaret to be laughed at.

Sometimes I think when she, and such as she, are held in derision, when the life of Christ is regarded as a woman's foolish dream—I think, will it be your turn to be mocked hereafter, O fools and blind? Too clever to accept that which finds its way to the hearts of greater ones than you, as well as to women and little children, will you have to learn the lesson and the truth when it is too late? They may laugh who win.

To send the paragraph to Gaspar: that was Margaret's next thought. How proud he would be! Very silent he was, very reserved, but this time he *would* be proud.

She drew her blotting-book out, and wrote to him on the spot. "Poste Restante, Paris," again; she had no later address, no letter from Gaspar.

Then the afternoon had drawn to a close, and there was no need to light the gas. Margaret sat on in the twilight and through the dusk, and when Elspet brought in her tea, and would have let in a little light upon the scene, Margaret rebelled, and said she liked the darkness.

Elspet, suspicious, stirred up the fire and peered

into her mistress's face. It was very pale, but that was nothing new. Elspet was rather blind, and had forgotten her spectacles, so her devices were foiled. Indeed, she would have looked at any rate in vain for tears; they had been there an hour or two before, but heaviness had overcome poor Margaret, and dreamland had carried her away.

Elspet knelt down on the rug, and took the hands that had grown very cold in hers.

She had little wisdom, but she had a large heart. The tears coursed themselves down her old cheek as she knelt, looking into the face of her darling, and reading easily enough the lines written there.

No definite sorrow, no disappointment even; only the utter loneliness of a young strong life whose youth and whose strength seemed wasting away.

The notice of her picture had raised Margaret's spirits to an unsafe height. When the darkness and Gaspar's absence came freshly upon her, a despondency she had never before experienced overpowered her.

Gaspar had been away for nearly a fortnight. Had he ever thought of her? *Could* he have thought and yet never written?

What was art in comparison with the love of Gaspar? What were the words which told her she would "outdo" other women, if, unlike other women, she were left to stand alone, to fight her fight alone? What was this to one word of Gaspar's.

Did he care for her? She was unworthy of

his love, she knew, but love is sometimes lavished on unworthy objects.

Yes, Margaret, so it is.

Why did her thoughts go back now to a time when another love had laid itself at her feet, when she had turned aside from it for the love of Gaspar? Had it been a sacrifice, and should she have tried, at least, to take the love that was pressed upon her, and leave the love she so desired, but that seemed, as ever, far away?

Elspet's hand, soft from washing, passed to and fro over the smaller, softer hands she held.

And keeping time to the regular swing of the strong arm, Margaret's thoughts ran thus (it was an old lesson, and she repeated it from memory):—

“‘How can I, when I don't love you?’

“‘Are you quite sure of that, Margaret?’

“‘Yes, quite sure.’

“‘And you don't care for some else? If I waited on——’

“‘I do love some one else—I love Gaspar. I can never leave him. I don't care for you half as much as for him; and I do not want to marry.’”

That was a year ago. And to-night she repeated to herself what she had said then:—“I don't love him as I love Gaspar.” It had not been a sacrifice, then, after all.

So it was the old threadbare story again—love given where it was not prized, and withheld, where it would have been treasured.

Yet I am so glad she is Margaret Marshall still, until the blessing comes largely, abundantly, as it should to her.

But it is not strange that, sitting over the red

falling fire, there should rise from her woman's heart "the cry of the human." Her love for God had not been so great, did it not open her heart to loves human.

She did not think it wrong to ask God for such a blessing now. Gaspar's love, if it might be possible! but if not, something to take into her heart. She did not fear that an idol should arise between her and heaven: a lonely life makes a woman hold very fast to God. And if later she should learn to fear, what then? Could she not pray again?

He who held the beloved disciple to His breast has taught us a nobler, a grander, broader, and more *human* lesson than any that have followed in His steps.

Sanctifying loves earthly by His presence and His blessing, He bids us love Him in and through all of these. They are not veils to hide Him from us, but rather the noblest revelations of Himself.

Yet when the eye of faith has grown strong to see Him without these, it sometimes pleases Him to show Himself in naked glory for a while. And then is His strength sufficient for us, ours being made perfect through weakness.

CHAPTER VII.

“Good Christian people, here lies for you an inestimable loan; take all heed thereof, in all carefulness employ it; with high recompense or else with heavy penalty will it one day be required back.”—
CARLYLE.

“Say ‘How do you do?’ my dear. This is your Aunt Margaret, who sent you the pretty pelisse. Oh, Miss Dolly! fie for shame! Don’t cry, there’s a dear. Give a sweet kiss to Aunt Margaret.”

Aunt Margaret—for the first time so addressed—opened her eyes to be sure she saw rightly. Had she fallen asleep, and was this a dream? Were these children from fairyland?

They hardly looked so. A little boy of six years old, a little girl of about four, dressed in large red and white check; small pale faces, in which great blue eyes were the most prominent features, framed in round beaver hats, and tied with large bows under the chin; and on each side of each pale face large green rosettes of ribbon protruding, either for ornament or to protect the little ears.

A fringe of fair brown hair peeping under the upturned brim of the hats, put the finishing touch to the quaint picture; and as Margaret looked at the little boy, the truth flashed upon her—James’s children, come from India; the “Toto” and “Dolly” whom she had heard of, whose wardrobes she had sometimes had to choose and send out. They had never seemed realities to her until now, though she was not ignorant of

their existence. Her sister-in-law was a stranger to her, James nearly as much so, and neither a good correspondent. Their lives, and the lives of the brother and sister in England were so different, their interests so widely apart, and James had been away since Margaret was a little girl. This must have been the news the letter had brought. What would Gaspar think of it?

They were real enough now, these little pale travellers. Dolly, with her thumb, glove and all, in her mouth, was roaring lustily, and burying her face in the nurse's gown; and Toto had made himself at home, and already found an amusement.

Up on the arm of the arm-chair, down with a bound on all fours on the carpet; a scramble up again by the seat, a climb on to the arm, a moment to balance himself, then all fours on the floor again. Was this the way little boys always went on? After a journey, too! What would it be to-morrow?

"Look here, Dolly," he cried, poising himself with both arms wide spread, and trying to make himself heard over the screaming of his sister; "look here what I'm going to do. Once, twice, thrice" (bang!—he had descended). "Don't cry, Dolly; see, I *never* cry when I tumble."

Dolly's screams continued in great force, and the jumping too; while the nurse, vainly attempting to stop both, gave, at the same time, an explanation of the unexpected arrival. She was not their nurse. Her mistress had consented to bring home Mr. Marshall's children with her own. He was in great distress, for Mrs. Marshall had died suddenly. There was nothing to be done with the

children but to send them home, and a good opportunity had offered a week after Mr. Marshall had written. The nurse was very sorry that Miss Marshall had been so taken by surprise; but, indeed, her mistress had expected the children to be met at Southampton; and it had put her to some inconvenience to spare her (the nurse) even to drive across London with them. She must return at once.

Margaret involuntarily heaved a sigh of relief. What was the care of the children in comparison with the expense and inconvenience, the almost impossibility of keeping a nurse?

"But you will say good-bye to them, and have something before you go, will you not?" she said.

The tears started into the woman's honest, kindly eyes. She threw her arms round Dolly and kissed her violently. Then Toto was seized in like manner. He resisted gallantly, however; for was he not in the very middle of his scramble into the seat of the chair, lying on his face, dragging his legs up after him?

"Oh, oh! let me go! don't you see the other train's passin', and I've got to jump from the injin on to the other injin, like the man did? Oh, oh! let me go, please; I'm saying 'please,' so you must let me go."

"And you won't say good-bye to poor 'Nanny,' Master Toto?" and the poor woman's voice shook as she made the appeal.

The boy seemed a little touched. His head-long career was for a moment stopped, and he stood up on the seat of the chair twirling the buttons on the nurse's cloak, and very meditative.

“When will I see you again, Master Toto?”

“Scarcely ever. We’ve got a house now at London, and Aunt Marg’ret’s going to stop with us, because mamma’s dead. I’ll be as tall as this when you come back. No, I’ll be a big man then, and I am going back to my papa in Inja—he said so. But Dolly won’t go. You may come and see Dolly, ’cos she’s only a gurl. Oh! a cat! a cat!” and he flung himself head foremost over the arm of the chair, and disappeared in an instant out of the room, in chase of Elspet’s old puss.

Elspet had prepared two large bowls of bread and milk, and now she undertook to take off the boy’s hat and comforter and to brush his hair, while Margaret, with little Dolly on her lap by the fire, succeeded in stopping the screaming, though the poor little body was still convulsed by the effects of a tremendous fit of sobbing. By degrees she became quieter, and pouted out her little lips to be fed.

Margaret had never had to do with children, but she had loved those she had seen, and instinctively she chose the best way of winning little Dolly’s heart. For a time she fed her in silence, only stooping now and then to kiss the silky little head within her arm. Then, by degrees, she drew her attention to little things in the room, a doll-penwiper on the table, or whatever was at hand; and the child began to look up confidently in her face, nodding assent, or making a little sign that she was listening, and approved, never forgetting to pout out the little mouth again for the welcome spoon and its con-

tents. Such large blue eyes; such a trustful, speaking, little face; what woman's heart would not have been led captive?

In the next room, over a basin of warm water, a struggle for supremacy was being carried on.

"But I had my face washed after lunchin'. I never have it washed so often. Yes, Dolly's had her face washed, I *dare—say*" (drawing out the words to double their length, and emphasizing them reproachfully), "but she's only a gurl! Boys should wash their faces themselves—Nanny said so. You're an ugly old woman, that's what you are; and you've got an ugly, ugly, ugly name. And, oh! let me go! I want to drum on the water-pan."

"Rum, tum, tum—rum, tum, tum—r-rum, r-rum, rum, tum, tum," went the hair-brush on the water-pan, in imitation of the band at Chundapore.

"Master, look here — (whatever's the child's name?) Master Charles, look here, there's a good boy."

"Oh, you old story! I amn't a good boy. You said I was a *bad* boy just a minnit before. And why do you call me 'Master Charles?'"

"Charles," repeated Margaret from the next room, "are you ready? Come in here."

He walked in sedately, with an indignant and ill-used air.

"Why do you call me *Charles?*" he said, again. "I'll call you Anna-Maria, and that's a *much* uglier name."

Then, changing his tone, which had never been more than one of reproach, he came up to Dolly, and looking at her compassionately,—

"Poor Dolly!" he said. "Isn't that *nice*, darling? Please give me some too, Aunt Marg'ret. I'm saying 'please.'"

"Don't you always say 'please,' Toto?"

"Not in Inja, never; but papa said at London we must say 'please.' I wish London was never found on the map! No I don't though; there's a arm-chair, and a water-pan, and there's jolly bread-and-milk, isn't there, Aunt Marg'ret?"

Margaret admitted that London furnished all these luxuries.

CHAPTER VIII.

"But I want one to play with—O, I want
A little yellow duck to take to bed."—

JEAN INGELow.

"Where's the man?" inquired Toto, looking up from his footstool by the fire, and making wrong shots (with the spoonful of bread-and milk) into his cheek.

"What man?" asked Margaret.

"Papa said there was a man at London; papa said the man would show me a gun, and show me how to shoot it: where's the man?"

"Do you mean Uncle Gaspar, Toto?"

"Yes, yes, that's the man. Dolly and me was to come to *London*, and there was a man at London what has guns, and whips, and things; and there was a lady—that's *you*, Aunt Marg'ret, isn't it? and we was to say 'please' always, wasn't we, Dolly?"

"Es, we was," responded Dolly.

"And we was to get everything we wanted when we jest said 'please,' wasn't we, Dolly?"

"Did papa always give you everything when you said 'please?'" asked Margaret, smiling.

"Not always, nearly always, sometimes. Once when I was a little boy, before we came out of Inja, you know, I asked to have mamma back again, and I said 'please' ever so often, but we didn't get her, did we, Dolly? Now I'm a big boy, you know, and I don't want her back." Then (seeing that Margaret looked up surprised), "I mean you know she'll never come back any more, but papa'll come back, won't he, Aunt Marg'ret? Dolly thinks she'll come back"—he whispered loudly in his aunt's ear—"but then Dolly's only a *gurl*."

The whisper was lost upon poor little Dolly; her head had fallen back upon Margaret's arm, and she was fast asleep. She was undressed as she lay there; and even when her little night-gown was put on, and the hands lifted and pushed through the sleeves, she did not awake.

But when she was laid down in Gaspar's room in Gaspar's bed (what desecration, a genius's room become a nursery!) the blue eyes opened wide, the under lip contracted and quivered, and there was another loud cry.

In vain Margaret tried to soothe her, in vain she patted her, sang to her, laid herself on the bed beside her: Dolly refused to be comforted.

"Oh! Toto," at last said Margaret, driven to despair, and rather afraid of the child's going

into a fit; "what is the matter? Do you know what she wants?"

Toto was sitting on the rug, a candle beside him on the floor, and Elspet's cat under his arm. He had taken advantage of Elspet and Margaret's attention being distracted by his sister's screams to burn the unfortunate animal's whiskers in the flames.

"There's jest half a one left now; don't you jump away now, Mister Cat, because you shan't go even if you say 'please'. I'm the barber, and you're papa, only I haven't any razors, and so—oh! yes, Aunt Marg'ret, I know what'll stop her crying—stuff something in her mouth; she always stops directly."

Margaret and Elspet stood aghast.

"It's a cooshie you want, isn't it darling? It's comin' now, darlin.' Aunt Marg'ret, get her a cooshie, and then you'll stop, won't you, Dolly? It's her cooshie she wants."

"What is a cooshie, Toto?"

"That's a cooshie—this is a cooshie, my comforter's a cooshie, but her own cooshie's in the cabin—I mean it's in the boxes."

He was led off captive to the open boxes.

"There," he said, in triumph, whisking out a tumbled piece of faded pink flannel; "there's her cooshie!" And before Margaret could rescue it, or divine its purpose, Toto had rolled it in a ball, had placed himself a few feet from the bed, and was taking aim at Dolly's head.

"There, don't cry, darlin', there's the cooshie!" he said, a little remorseful at having made so good and telling a shot, for Dolly's head was

quite hidden in flannel. But to the no small surprise of the lookers-on, the crying had suddenly been stilled, and the flannel as suddenly disappeared.

A few minutes later, when Margaret stepped softly towards the child, she found the eyes fast shut, and heard the heavy regular breathing of sleep. A corner of the pink flannel peeped out, and Margaret drew the sheet down ever so little to discover its use. Dolly's tiny hands clasped it closely, and one thumb wrapped in its folds was in her mouth. She cooed over it in her placid sleep as only a very little child can.

Margaret inwardly resolved that henceforth the luxury of a "cooshie" should always be provided for Dolly's bedtime.

And now Toto's time had come. At first he was very skittish and restless, but when Margaret found that a story or any trifling incident seemed to rivet his attention, and that he was eager for information on all subjects, the task of undressing him became easy. He insensibly pulled his arms out of everything, lost in the recital of the wonderful things Uncle Gaspar had done.

"And now you have to say your prayers, Toto, do you know them by yourself, or shall I make some for you?"

"Oh, I know some;" and kicking his boots to the other end of the room he prepared to kneel. He was up again before he was down.

"Aunt Marg'ret, let me try again, *please*. I wanted my boot to go into the bath. There isn't *any* water in it."

He was off to the other end, and back again

in an instant. Margaret did not as yet pretend to manage him.

It was a successful shot this time; the boot clattered satisfactorily in the bath, and Toto with a smile of triumph knelt down at Margaret's lap.

"Please God bless papa and mamma (no, not mamma, she's dead). Please God bless papa, and make me and Dolly a good boy. No, make me and Dolly good girls and boys" (in a stage whisper, "That's not right, Aunt Marg'ret. I've got my prayers so bungled"). "And please God forgive all our sins, and bring us safe home to London. (Oh, we've come to London. What shall I say? I must have a new prayer now, Aunt Marg'ret.) Amen."

And then he sprang up like a shot, and pulled his little shirt up to his knees to warm them.

Margaret drew him to her, and kissed his forehead. "You are very like the 'man,' Toto—very like Uncle Gaspar."

"And he's a big man, *isn't* he, Aunt Marg'ret?" said he, opening his eyes wide, and contemplating a leap on to the bed, to the certain destruction of the sleeping Dolly.

CHAPTER IX.

"God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame."
ELIZABETH BARRET-BROWNING.

Margaret had but little time for reading now; but weary one day from painting, she took a favourite book of poems from the table, and sat

down by the fire. Her eyes fell upon the lines which head this chapter.

Had it not been true for her, this saying of the great poet? I will not call her poetess, for hardly yet has the term ceased to be associated with a certain feebleness, and nothing that is feeble must approach the name of Elizabeth Barret-Browning. Moreover, is it not conceivable, poets in their sphere being most especially and essentially of the *soul*, that there should be no distinction of sex, any more than of caste among them? The pathos and tenderness of the woman, the power and energy of the man defined and separate as ever—who would lack either?—but each a *poet*, speaking to souls in the individual language of the soul that utters, striving for none of the other's individualities, because that would be to lose their own.

Was it not true for Margaret, that God's gifts had come to her, putting her dreams to shame? She had dreamt of love to be hers, not of a life to be lived for a great purpose, as she brooded sorrowfully over the fire alone.

Now that a purpose had come to her, she shamed indeed. God had given her what she should not herself have chosen, because in her blindness she could never have conceived the extent of the blessing conferred, and to be conferred by her again. Hitherto she had only thought of putting her trust in God, of holding to Him in good report and evil report, of praying Him to show Gaspar more of himself, of protesting when Elspet prevaricated, and then of turning to her own heart with a condemnation of what

she found there, and a "judge not" uttered to herself.

Hitherto it seemed to her that she had stood at the portals of the kingdom of heaven, and that she had not even besieged the gates. Now on a sudden they had been opened to her; nay, was she not "a doorkeeper in the house of God?"

Two souls had been committed to her keeping; two child-souls moreover, impressionable, trustful, and as yet unspoiled. There was something to be lived for after all. Care they would bring upon her; maybe things worse than care; but what was that to the life of selfishness which before had been forced, as it were, upon her? It seemed to Margaret that these two children had come to be the saving of her soul.

It was a little more than a week after their arrival that the ring of the postman heralded the important advent of a letter.

"Dear Margaret," it ran, "business still detains me here, but I find much in Paris to gratify my peculiar tastes. My literary labours have not, as you may easily understand, progressed, but I lay up, if I mistake not, much seed for future harvests.

"By the way, can you help me temporarily with a small sum? £15 or £20 would meet my present wants and a sudden call. I hope soon to refund it to you with interest; or, if you like, I might perhaps manage to invest it in my speculation. Do not delay remitting this trifle for I may soon leave Paris. I shall return to England when I cry *Eureka!*—'I have found it.'

"Your affectionate brother,

"GASPAR MARSHALL.

"P.S.—So you have James's children to keep you company. Have you drawn upon his bank yet for their maintenance? If not, do so now, and £20 of his will do as well as yours; it is only for a week or so that I shall want it. Your's again,
"G. M."

So wrote the brother, as buttoning a pair of faultless lavender gloves, and smoothing his hat with his sleeve, he took a minikin umbrella between his first finger and thumb, and sauntered carelessly towards the "Trois Frères," where (on the strength, be it supposed, of Margaret's "trifle") he ordered a regal dinner from a regal *menu*.

And so read the sister, with a flushed face and a loud beating at her heart. Twenty pounds—it was not in the bank! Certainly it was not in the house. As yet James's deposit was not available—"not payable," she had been told, "at present." And Gaspar's demand was imperative; fifteen pounds, at the very least, must be sent to him to-day. Where was she to turn in her perplexity, ah! where?

"God," said Dolly from the hearthrug, innocent of Margaret's trouble, and answering some question of her brother's.

Women are imaginative, I have said; Margaret took the unconscious answer of the child humbly to her heart. She rose from her seat, knelt on the floor beside her, and kissed the soft, pale face.

"What were you saying, children?" she asked.

"Dolly was saying the angels must have built heaven, Aunt Marg'ret—is that true?"

"No, darling, God made heaven."

"But where did He live while it was being made, Aunt Marg'ret?"

"God lives everywhere, Toto."

"Well, if He lives everywhere, I wonder why He ever wanted a heaven—don't you, Aunt Marg'ret? if He lives everywhere heaven must be a teeny place when He gets in, musn't it, Aunt Marg'ret?"

"We don't know what heaven is like, Toto," she answered, averting her face a little from his earnest gaze, and rather puzzled by the wholly new ideas which the child brought before her.

"No, we can't never know 'cept we go and see, and then we can't ever get out again, can we? Mamma's stayed in ever so long, hasn't she, Dolly? But it can't be a little wee place, Aunt Mar'gret, cos it wouldn't hold all the angels, would it, Aunt Marg'ret? And it can't be a large big place, it can't be everywhere, like God is, cos then the angels would be everywhere, wouldn't they? There'd be an angel on my drum here, and an angel up the chimney, and an angel in the waste-basket, and——"

"Hush, Toto! don't speak so, darling. I will tell you more about angels to-night when you are going to bed, because I have no time to stop now. Do you know I think there are angels nearly everywhere, sent by God to take care of us; perhaps there are some in the room now; so we musn't speak of them the same way we speak of toys and other things. They are God's messengers, you know."

Oh! little children, "so fresh from God," may you not sometimes be his messengers? Is it not

your mission to diffuse the rich fragrance of innocence, of wondering, curious, yet unquestioning faith on hearts on whom contact with a cold world must needs have left its hardening traces?

Margaret was not yet hardened, but she rose from the hearthrug that morning feeling herself a better woman. No actual word could she recall which had let flow the balm upon her heart, a moment before so anxious; the heart of a little child only had reflected itself in her own. She fancied that a child's lips might, after all, be the nearest thing on earth to the portals of that heaven over which she had left them marvelling. The something to love and be loved by had come to her at last.

An hour later she had put on her cloak and bonnet and sallied forth into the street. Elspet was not to be her companion to-day, even could she have left the little philosophers on the hearthrug.

A shop at the corner of the street was Margaret's destination.

"Five pounds! is that the most you can give me? it cost three times that."

It was the most they could give her, but she was forced to be content. The one handsome piece of jewellery Margaret had ever possessed passed over the counter. But what mattered it? Five pounds passed into her pocket, and ten could be made up at home. That afternoon's post carried the "trifle" Gaspar had demanded to Paris.

For the rest? herself and the children till the

speculation should answer, till "Eureka" should be the cry?

"He that feedeth the ravens," said Margaret, as she sat down to write to Mr. Pickering.

"Am I fit to give lessons?—in the very first elements of drawing even? Tell me the truth, please, but tell me quickly if you can, and how I am to set about it. I am ashamed so to trouble you, but I am at a loss where else to turn, and you are so kind; and surely I may do something, though I am a woman; other women are doing great things every day. I do not want to do great things *now*; I want to do a small thing to some purpose."

CHAPTER X.

"O, to be a roaming
In an English dell."

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

Dull February had passed into March; spring was bursting from winter with the catkins upon the willow, and the red full shoots upon the birch. And a great commotion was going on in the little lodging that had heretofore been Margaret's home.

For before the spring was a day older, her glad entry was to be watched eagerly by two pairs of little curious eyes: not through the scanty medium of a lime-tree here, and a dusky beech there, railed round in what are satirically called the "gardens" of the squares, put in its fullest

beauty, as it rises over God's green fields and mossy banks, and makes the fecund earth to awake and testify of One who doeth all things well.

Even in London, in the heart of the great city, with all its sufferings and with all its sins, the spring makes its glad advent to be heard. For when the first basket of primrose roots, buried in moss that has not yet lost its wintry yellow, makes its appearance in the duskiest by-street, does it not speak of the regeneration that is going on in the blessed country? Do we not hear very plainly indeed the echoes of those footsteps which press violets and all their fragrant company from the warm damp Mother Earth?

Now, more than primroses had come to gladden the eyes of weary Londoners. Low carts drawn by picturesque shaggy ponies, with bright brass harness, wended their way in the early forenoons, bearing burdens that must set the hearts of all artists, poets, and lovers of God and his nature aglow. Tall white arum lilies in the front, standing out majestically from a bed of feathery green; next to them cinerarias of many hues, deep lustrous blue, or crimson, or dappled with white; hyacinths that scented all the street—only a shilling apiece! Tulips red and tulips white, primulas in a coronal of leaves, cyclamens trembling under even the easy motion of the easy cart and docile pony, and crocuses shooting out lusty spikes of green to herald the full pale buds within their heart: buds that too often attain to nothing further, O sanguine buyer! but shrivel up with all their golden secrets undis-

closed, like many hopes, and many resolves, and much that is earthly.

"Flowers! pretty flowers! all kinds of flowers!" The cry called Margaret from the monotonous labours of packing.

Not so the children. Their toil, prolonged over many days, was still all-absorbing. So many things had to be three times packed, so many that had been thus looked after were in the end not meant to go at all. Time after time had Margaret rescued a knitted mat, a tidy from a chair, a penwiper, that were most entirely the property of the landlady and her lodging.

The change had come suddenly upon them all. Instead of Gaspar's return, the news of an intended journey to the East had forced upon Margaret the necessity for economy more strict than it had ever been. Some days she had considered upon the subject, and then, hardly had she settled that a lodging in the country would be alike cheaper and more healthy for her pale children, than the illness of little Dolly came to confirm her resolution.

To the East! What did that mean? An absence quite limitless. And London without her brother had become very desolate. Moreover, its disadvantages were numerous now. The children had no freedom, and anything like a park or garden was too far to be accessible for them. If Elspet went out with them, household matters, the plain homely dinner for instance, must fare very badly; and if Margaret devoted herself entirely to them, her painting could not be carried on. And how much depended on that painting

and its success, she was now beginning fully to learn.

The "few days" of the loan to Gaspar had multiplied tenfold, and no £15 had been returned. The bank refused to make any advance of money on her brother James's account, and gave her to understand that the amount once in their hands had been already overdrawn. No letter from India came to remove or lessen the difficulty, and trouble and anxiety had begun to tell upon Margaret's quiet face.

For it was a very patient face still. She had not lived so long without having a hundred experiences of what God had done for her. A hundred times she had been on the verge of despair, as one by one Gaspar's schemes had failed and brought them to the brink of ruin; and a hundred times she had risen and stood upright, she had lifted up her face and said, "Thou hast set my feet in a large room."

The flesh truly was still weak; weak it would remain while it remained flesh. But the spirit being willing, and a greater spirit of Love being willing, could not the flesh be combated and overcome?

So while trouble pencilled her face with its hard finger, the peace which passeth all understanding reigned there too. They are not incongruous, these traces and this peace. God loves to set apart his children, and to set on them His seal. Sometimes He stamps them with His right hand, full of gifts, and sometimes in His left he reaches out a martyr's crown. For there are martyrs nowadays great as any that

have lived and died of old. I often think there will not be diverse mansions up in heaven for these and those. For both, at least, the cry of the poet-king is true—"They that fear Him lack nothing."

Margaret stood at the window, and feasted on the sight before her. Too often she had murmured in her soul at the poverty which debarred her from the innocent pleasure of possessing a few flowers. A doubt of God's justice had, perhaps, crossed her mind at times; for the purer the soul the more eager is the Spirit of all Evil to enter in and mar its blamelessness. Why had He drawn His line between them, saying, "O rich, be happy, and possess all things!" and, "O poor, be satisfied with——" With what, Margaret? The Spirit of God made answer, "With Me!"

So the disloyal thought had passed away.

Margaret had but few friends now—she had never known many that were rich—but she thought of those she knew, and was compelled to acknowledge to herself that their competency had not satisfied them.

Mrs. Armytage was rich—rich in the eyes of Margaret. Was she not restless, giddy even, good-natured perhaps, but lonely, and so selfish? Luke Carew, her brother, was rich. Had he not failed in his love, and was not his life purposeless?

"It must be a good thing in some ways to be poor," said Margaret, "because, at least, it makes us very prayerful. One can hardly be very poor, and yet very worldly; for the world has no bait to offer to such as me.

"We must be satisfied somewhere. If the world fails, what then? We must turn elsewhere. And there is no middle-ground, that I can hear of, between heaven and the world."

A little blessing had come to lighten Margaret's cares; a little tangible blessing, I mean, over and above the patient, trusting spirit. The "Girl's Head" had sold for twenty pounds, and that sum had enabled her to pay off every farthing she owed in London, to set aside a small portion for the first week's rent in the new home, and for the journey thither.

Now, as she looked out, she planned another picture in her mind. It should be just this—the low cart, with its gay nodding load, the rough pony, the pale poor man beside it in the shovel hat.

What a pity that she could not give the monotonous cry that accompanied them:—

"Flowers! Pretty flowers! All a-growing and a-blowing!"

"But I am not a poet," she said, "else I would. I would make my picture speak."

I am not at all sure of that, Margaret. Say rather, hopefully, with that woman-poet you revere—

"At least I am a poet in being poor, thank God!"

CHAPTER XI.

“Little white cottages, all in a row,
Gardens, where bachelor’s-buttons grow,
Swallows’ nests in roof and wall,
And up above the still blue sky,
Where the woolly-white clouds go sailing by—
I seem to be able to see it all!”

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

All partings, even the most trivial—if such an adjective can be applied to noun so solemn in its suggestions—savour of sadness.

The last long parting, of which all the lesser appear to us as harbingers, and from which they consequently borrow their gloom, partakes perhaps least of all of real sadness.

Or should partake, rather. For is there not in the final separation a lack of that miserable element of *uncertainty*, for those at least who have not drifted pilotless on the sea of life? Parting for times and seasons are fraught with fears of what may happen before we meet again; above all are they laden with anxieties for the veiled path upon which the beloved one takes his course alone. But once satisfied that the Creator has recalled to Himself the created, the work of his own hands, all apprehensions and all suspense must be at an end for evermore. The sorrow will remain truly, keen and poignant; an arrow may be entered into the soul; but, without fear, grief loses its bitterest sting. It is like love, of which it has been said, that ceasing to hope and ceasing to fear, it ceases to exist.

A last look at a dreary, dingy lodging brought the tears into poor Margaret’s eyes. She had

known much sorrow there, much care, and very little love. Yet had the bare, smoke-streaked walls endeared themselves to her; perhaps because so often they had kept her company when other friends, and kinder, more yielding faces failed.

The children naturally shared in no way her feelings. New faces, new cats, new flowers, a journey in the train, a change—that was the vista which opened before them. The poor landlady, who came to assist in the migration and its preparations, and whose tears were far more profuse and nearer to the surface than Margaret's, met with no sympathy from the elated little couple. "Oh no! we won't see you again! You'll be dead before we come back!" Or, "We won't come to London till we're *big*. Aunt Marg'ret's got a house at the country now." Or, "*No!* you mustn't come with *us*, 'cos there wouldn't be any room for you! Aunt Marg'ret, isn't it time to go? Isn't it time to go, Aunt Marg'ret? Please, Aunt Marg'ret, when is it time to go?"

"Have you got everything ready, Toto?" he was asked.

"Oh yes—I'm just *tired* of being ready."

"Is the cab there, Master Toto?" inquired Elspet, by way of passing the time while she strapped the little bundle of wraps.

"*There!*" he cried scornfully; "I dare say he's gone away now! I dare say other people is driving him now!"

"I dare say they is!" echoed little Dolly, pouting, standing the picture of injured innocence on a chair by the window, her green rosettes adjusted to her ears, and her hands in a minikin muff,

which hid a little ragged but much-beloved penny doll, from her brother's scorn and irony.

At length they started: canary, cage, and all; bandboxes, trunks, and many parcels were piled up outside and stuffed within, and with a sigh of hope fulfilled, Dolly settled herself on Margaret's knee.

Toto held determinedly to two precious burdens—the cat minus the points of its whiskers, which had been the poor lodging-keeper's parting gift, and a long black cotton bag, very cobbled, and apparently very empty, which was suspended from his arm.

"What have you got there, Toto?" Margaret asked, as her eyes fell on the mysterious appendage.

"It's mine and Dolly's tooth-brush, Aunt Marg'ret, and look here!" He plunged his arm into the depths of the black bag, and brought out a bottle of clear liquid, carefully corked. "This is water what we'll wash them with: there isn't any time to stop and wash in the trains, is there, Aunt Marg'ret? And then we'll be nice and clean when we come to the country, Aunt Marg'ret—and won't that be nice, Aunt Marg'ret?"

"Very nice, darling," she answered, laughing.

Much nicer and cleaner than they had been for many a day, certainly: comfortably settled within easy reach of water at home, Toto and Dolly had never thought of this important and imperative duty. "But their pleasures are few," said Margaret; "let them enjoy them while they can, and such as they can have. Poor little ones! God knows how soon they will have cares to

fret them; He cannot wish us to come between them and their little happiness now."

The closely-packed houses at first, the clouds of smoke behind them as they left the city, the flying trees and fields and hedges, were cause to them of unceasing interest.

A dog running beside the train, and barking lustily, raised a scream of excitement from them both.

And when these things began to pall, there was a long tunnel, and Dolly was taken upon her aunt's knees, where her fears at the unnatural darkness were quickly dispelled, while Toto had recourse to the black bag, and plied his hard, unused tooth-brush vigorously.

It amused Margaret not a little to find that the system of all things in common (all, except a sword, which could *never* do for a "gurl," and a Bible, which she could not read—nor he either, for that matter, as yet) was carried to such lengths that even the tooth-brush was the property of both.

"Here, darlin'," said the little man to his sister when daylight had once more burst upon them, scrubbing the brush with the palm of his hand, and then on the outside of the black bag. "Here, darlin', you can do it now; it's so nice to do!"

Before the novelty of the journey had worn off their destination was reached.

A lodging, tiny enough, but clean and cheery, bright fires burning (a luxury not to be continued on so extensive a scale, but very cheering to the new-comers), clean beds, and the kind face of another good-hearted landlady. There are many

good hearts in the world nowadays, in spite of the cry of the degeneracy of the age; and so Margaret thought that night.

In the morning, fresh pleasures. The sun flooding the little rooms, and taking away nothing from the pervading look of cleanliness; a little garden, where rings of crocuses were springing up; and a fresh March wind carousing in the trees.

The children were early at the window, in clean pinafores and high spirits. The idea of playing all alone, and on the nice green grass too!

When Margaret joined them, a shower of questions was rained upon her.

"Who left those big baskets in the garden, Aunt Marg'ret?"

They were the flower-beds, marked out with wicker-work and handles. He must have been a strong man who left them there; but I do not think Toto and Dolly would have been the least surprised, in their present state of mind, to have seen a giant emerge from a crocus, and carry off the "left" baskets on his head.

Everything was like fairy-land at Fernhill.

CHAPTER XII.

It would be strange, even in this English atmosphere of reserve, were it possible for any one to settle in a given place, say, with the strongest determination to avoid society, and find

themselves at the end of a few weeks as isolated as when they first arrived.

There is the clergyman, at all events, whose duty it is to seek out all new comers, especially if their face should become familiar to him in church. The duty is often a painful one, and too often is unwelcome, but a duty it remains. It behoves us I think to look compassionately upon the intruder in such cases, bearing in mind that we too have offices to fulfil as distasteful and as unwelcome to our friends.

Margaret and her children had not been a week at Fernhill before Mr. and Miss Williams called. Father and daughter though they were, they bore little resemblance to each other. But I am anticipating; for Margaret was not at home to receive the visit, and her first impressions were gathered in church.

The morning service being too long for the children, she had gone alone; and the sermon over, she felt she could not repent of having left them behind. For never did anything appear to her as less likely to have influenced a child in any favourable manner.

Not that she expected poor little Toto to benefit from, or even to listen to, a sermon. Christ Himself would hardly, I think, have wished one of those little ones of whom He spoke—nay, whom He exalted into the blessedness of His human arms—to hearken to the Sermon on the Mount. And what sermon ever approached to that one, in simplicity as in grandeur, in love as in majesty? A little child may have listened to Him, speaking as man never spake, and may have carried away

in its infant mind words which death itself could not silence, but only swell; but I do not think that Christ *bade* the child. There is no instance of His demanding bricks without straw; and when He lifted up His voice to call young children, it is not written that He cried, "Follow me!" as to His older servants, but only, "Suffer them to come! Forbid them not!"

Margaret remembered this; but moreover she did not wish that anything external should be suffered to blur the image of God, if at present that image must remain misty and imperfect. It was at least a simple image still.

Would it have remained so had they been forced to sit through the weary cut-and-dry discourse of the morning? God's house they knew the place to be—the man speaking was God's servant. Then the message must be God's too. What a hard, ungodlike, rather un-Christlike, message to put into his mouth!

"I don't know how it was," said Margaret with a sigh of relief, turning into the road, arched over with its powdered elms, hardly shady yet, but just green enough to mystify the sky—"I don't know how it was, the subject was very good, and it was very well worded; and he seemed very earnest about it, at least very decided, if that is the same thing (but I am not sure that it is), and it was all quite true. But how tasteless he made it all, and how hard and doctrinal it sounded! Must I go there every Sunday? Ah, this is one thing lost in leaving London! There was always some one within a stone's throw who could teach us something, and teach it well."

“We are too ready of complaint,” the poet says. And another—

“Judge not the preacher, for he is thy judge,
How know’st thou but thy sins made him miscarry?”

The verse came into Margaret’s mind; but it neither satisfied nor silenced her. If he had miscarried, she thought, she could have forgiven him; but his “faulty faultlessness” aggravated her. And then preachers are a recognised butt, a bone of contention; poor Prometheuses bound to a rock, afterwards to be torn to pieces by ravenous eagles. True, Prometheus has the advantage of a short half hour over the birds of prey, but have they not all the week to feed upon him?

It was not one o’clock of the Sunday forenoon, and already Mr. Williams was being fed upon by Margaret, as she paced home with a less pleasant expression upon her face than was usual (because her underlip was pouted significantly), and by Mrs. Hobson, the landlady of “Gardenbank,” in fact, of Margaret’s present home. Indeed, according to her account, the greater part of the parish was probably feeding too. She met Margaret a hundred yards from the house.

“He do knock Scripture at ye, ye see, miss, like as we were convicts a-going to be hanged—you’d never go to think we was a respectable, steady parish, miss, without no pertikler sins, so to speak, to hear him letting on—now would you, miss? He’s that hard, you’d take him to be made of half-sovereigns; and not he, miss! he’s never a penny more nor he can just scratch along with, miss—and him to knock us that way with Scripture!”

Mrs. Hobson felt she could better have received a rebuke from a parson composed of half-sovereigns.

Margaret's reply was interrupted by quick, regular footsteps behind. Mr. Williams and his daughter passed them.

He was an elderly man, probably past his sixtieth year. About the middle height, his figure was not very erect; rather his head and shoulders were not so, and yet he had not a slouch; people with decided faces and mouths do not slouch. I must say, then, that he projected his head slightly forwards. For everything about Mr. Williams implied action; his square mouth, firmly closed, had not become so unintentionally; his head did not project itself, therefore, from inclination, from weakness, from indecision, but because he wished it so to project. We may wish and will unconsciously. I do not mean that Mr. Williams had at any given moment decided that henceforth his head should rather precede himself.

His hair was already silvered, and yet his face bore few traces of age; and his quick, regular tread had something of youth in it, and something of age. It seemed to Margaret that each step began with a slight shuffle, and then recovered itself with a very slight spring.

His eyes grey and keen, and withal very truthful, were reflected in his daughter, minus the keenness. Hers were larger, softer perhaps, very wide open, and of a deeper grey. She had no pretence to good looks: a white face, the cheek bones a little high, and the face broad; the whole face square, and the figure short and set. Her forehead was

very low, and the dark, colourless hair, neither black nor brown, was drawn tightly back, and gathered into thick plaits behind. But even the hair took a square set, and left the low forehead square too. Mrs. Hobson had a favourable report to give of Miss Williams, she appeared to be more or less liked in the village.

The next day when Margaret, with Toto, arrived at the rectory to return her visit, she was ushered into a square drawing-room, where in a square arm-chair Mr. Williams was seated. He raised his head from a Greek Testament and three commentaries, and levelled his spectacles at the intruders. It was some time before he unsquared himself sufficiently to move, or to address them; but when he did so, Margaret was agreeably surprised. His manner had not the full courtesy of the old school, but neither had it any of the hollow forms and parades of over-joyment of the new.

"I am afraid I have disturbed you," said Margaret, apologizing.

"Not at all—pray take a seat. My daughter will be with you immediately. You have not long been a resident in my parish, I think?"

And then they had some talk of village matters, at which Margaret fancied the mouth before her squared itself a little more resolutely, though no word of blame against his parishioners escaped Mr. Williams's lips.

And finally, Ellen Williams, in a brown dress, with a collar that did not meet by two inches, but scrupulously neat and clean, came into the room, and held out a square white hand to Margaret.

"Papa and I are very glad to see you," said she. "I saw you in church, and I wanted to know you. Papa does not see much who is in church; but if he could he would have liked to know you."

"This is my little nephew," said Margaret.

"Yes, I know; Mrs. Hobson told me. Are you fond of children? I am; but I like babies best. Do you like babies?"

CHAPTER XIII.

"Pickering, ain't you done with that scribbling now?"

"No, missus; not just yet. Hope there's no offence," he went on, reading aloud each word as he wrote it, and blotting every line with an emphatic application of his coat-sleeve.

"Pickering, I ain't used to be kept waiting so. I want a cheque cashiered, if you please, immediately, Pickering."

"Cashed, I think you mean, my woman."

"You know well enough what I mean, Pickering. Don't prevaricate, now, just to get your letter written out. It isn't any use, Josh"—Mrs. Pickering corrected herself—"It isn't any use, Pickering, to put off, because you always has to do it at last."

"What's it for, old woman?"

"What for? Why, just for the journey, of course. It's all your notion about going, Pickering;

and very glad your poor wife is to tear herself away from the blessings of 'ome and 'appiness, and all for the sake of you, Pickering. And all I asks is for you to be grateful, Pickering, and put on a smiling face sometimes to your poor wife—your poor Juliana, that you courted so at Margate. You ain't got a poetic soul like mine, Pickering, if you can go and forget all that so soon."

"But it's a long time ago, my woman," said her husband, clapping-to the blotting-book of which he had made so little use, and preparing to light his pipe.

"It do seem very long some days, Pickering, and other times it seems nothing at all. It don't seem no time now, do it, since I sat on the step of that *dear* bathing-machine——"

"Only sixpence a bathe, my woman, wasn't it?"

"That *dear* old bathing machine," she continued, not heeding the interruption, "and you comes by so *very* handy, Pickering, and says, 'Juliana, I see you're *very* fond of the ocean. If you'll be Mrs. P., you'll have pictures of the ocean so long as you live; and what's more, you'll have *all* the money I get for 'em."

"I was very young, wasn't I, old woman, when I said that?"

"That's ten years come Easter, Pickering, and——"

"You couldn't sit very comfortable on a bathing-machine step now, could you, Mrs. P.?"

This was too much for Juliana, coupled with the loud laugh that accompanied it. She threw herself into an arm-chair, and gave way to hysterics.

Mr. Pickering rang the bell without laying down his pipe or changing the position of his legs, which now rested upon the mantelpiece.

Fitful sobbing went on at intervals for some time; and, as the bell was not answered, the anxious husband did not attempt to bring further help. He eyed his wife, however, now and then from his corner, and then, as Hood says, "he eyed his pipe."

Mrs. Pickering's arm-chair was in the window. When she had burrowed in all parts of her apron and her hands, and the effort of sobbing had become a little exhaustive, she threw her head back, turning her red and streaked face from her husband, and remained quiet, looking out of the window with swollen eyes, and occasionally applying her handkerchief to them.

Her appearance was so exactly that of an injured wife upon the stage that to any one but Joshua Pickering the scene would have appeared wholly comic. The tremendous palpitations and heavings, her tear-stained cheeks, her stout figure, her round dimpled hands both employed in an apparent endeavour to quiet those heavings, and her tragedy-queen attire, all served to perfect their theatrical effect. She wore a long soft green dress (an olive green), and on her head an ornament, half cap, half coif, composed of tumbled yellow lace and other white materials. On the dress itself too was a profusion of the same lace, rare and costly in itself, and all the more out of keeping on this account with the common dress and its wearer. A ponderous red coral necklace put the finishing touch to this peculiar toilette.

But Mr. Pickering had too long been behind the scenes to see much amusement in the little comedy. Moreover, it so often ended in a tragedy, of temper and sulkiness, that he felt obliged to seize the first opportunity of bringing matters to a more pleasant termination—of taking the bull by the horns, as he said.

“Here, old woman,” said he, “here’s the cheque. You always get your way in the end—eh?” and he poked her playfully. “Your nervous system ain’t so strong as it used to be, though you’re such a fine woman still. And you can spend this any way you like—on the road, you know. What do you think of Marseilles, and on to Italy?”

Mrs. Pickering was now well enough to begin to think a little, and to slip the cheque into her pocket, determining to “cashier” it herself later in the day.

“Not that it’s the cheque as has upset me so, Pickering; only tokens is tokens, and I don’t seem, somehow, to realise as you love me, Pickering, without you show me it—some nice little way, you see.”

“Well, well, that’ll do, old woman,” he said. “I’m going out to drop a letter in the pillarpost, and I’ll cash your cheque, or you can keep it till I come home with the money, if that’ll make ye happy.”

And “Oh my eyes!” he added to himself as he went out, “what an old fool the poor old girl is! I’d run away from her to-morrow (don’t ye see yourself running, Mr. P.?) only what’d become of her, I should like to know? She’d starve, let alone the hysterics.”

He stopped at the first pillar post-box, and dropped in a letter with a smeared address.

"Poor thing, poor thing!" he muttered to himself, "I'll be bound she has a hard time of it. She don't make her twenty-five to thirty a-day, Joshua Pickering, like you." And it was not of his wife that the artist spoke this time. She, as has been seen, had the upper hand with both her husband and his earnings.

He strolled slowly on towards his studio, to make, as he said to himself, "a few more pot-boilers." And his next door neighbour heard him for the remainder of the morning alternately singing snatches from "Norma" and the "Traviata," and quoting in a strange monotone from *The Taming of the Shrew*—

"A woman moved is like a fountain troubled
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty."

"Not that she'd ever much to spare, dear soul," remarked Mr. Pickering, *en passant*, sweeping in a chalk cliff and a breaker.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I thought I might come in and see you, as I have nothing particular to do," said Ellen Williams naïvely, her white face and frank grey eyes looking out from a round brown hat with brown ribbons, and fixing themselves steadily on Margaret.

"I am so glad," was the answer, as honestly

given. "You will not mind my going on with my painting, will you? because I am so anxious to finish this picture."

"I should like to see you paint, because I don't know how you do it. Please go on. But you have got a headache, haven't you?"

Margaret's face answered the query well enough. She was standing before her easel with one hand on her waist, and with the other plying her brush. To the usual pallor of her face dark lines were added, which threw out the eyes themselves, and gave them a new beauty. But it was a melancholy beauty, and Ellen Williams was discomfited.

"I don't like to see you look so; you have a headache, and I think you are unhappy, too."

Margaret turned away sharply to get a fresh tube of paint from the box on a chair beside her.

"You're not vexed at me, are you?" asked Ellen.

Margaret turned at once, and put her hand on her shoulder.

"You did not think I was angry? I hope not."

"No: you are too good to be angry; but you might be vexed. But if you are not vexed, please tell me, are you unhappy?"

"Not very happy, dear," said Margaret, her lips quivering a little, and two large tears that had welled into her eyes rolling heavily down her face, and falling on her palette with a little splash.

"At least I am a little unhappy and a little unwell, and each makes the other worse. But you have made me worst of all, Ellen. I should never have cried if you had not come here."

"I always do something wrong," said poor Ellen, who took everything as matter of fact. "I wish I had stayed at home and finished Mrs. Bunting's frock."

"I am very glad you didn't. It does people good to cry sometimes, when they are unhappy. I did not mean that seeing you had made me sorrowful, Ellen."

But Ellen looked very puzzled still.

"I never cry," said she. "I don't remember crying since mamma died, and that's ten years ago. O, I cried once when papa was angry with Jack, and once when Jack went back to school, but that's ever so long ago too."

"Who is Jack, Ellen?"

"My brother."

"I never knew you had a brother."

"No; because we don't speak of him, and we can't love him now as we did. Jack has turned out bad."

"Does he never come home?" asked Margaret, roused at the news of anything concerning a brother, and her heart opening to the unworthy Jack immediately.

"O no; he is not fit to come back, he has displeased papa too much, and we never talk about him. You would hardly know we had ever had a Jack at home now. Except when I find something of his in the passage cupboard, I almost forget he is alive."

"And he never writes, Ellen?"

"No, he never writes. He doesn't care for us at all."

"How do you know that?"

"Because he never comes home. I stay with papa because I love him, and Jack stays away, so he cannot love him."

"But perhaps he is afraid to come home."

"Yes, I dare say he is. I don't know whether papa would let him come into the house. He got into a dreadful scrape once—he spent more money than he had, and papa paid his bills once or twice, and then he told him if any more came in he would send him away to Vancouver's Island, or Van Diemen's Land, or somewhere that he should not be a disgrace. And after *that*"—Ellen opened her eyes wide and looked up into Margaret's face—"he got more bills in, and then he tried to get the letters before papa came down to breakfast, and once or twice he drove six miles to Shingledown to get the afternoon post. And at last he opened a letter that wasn't a bill, but something very private for papa. So papa asked him whether he had seen it, and he said 'Yes.' We were always taught to speak the truth, and I don't think Jack ever got rid of the habit. However papa said he should take off half his allowance that year, so he had thirty pounds left to live upon; and he told him his insolence was unbearable, but that, as Elisha left it to God to punish the children that mocked him, so he would leave it to God to punish Jack. And when people said that Jack took to gambling and playing billiards at Shingledown, papa said that was God's punishment, leaving him to himself and the devil; and so he said he wasn't fit to come home any more. Jack was very proud, and he has never come home. I never said good-

bye to him even; papa met him in Shingledown, in the street beyond the clock. And that's seven years ago. I was fifteen then. I am twenty-two this month."

"And I am nearly twenty-four," said Margaret. Then she relapsed into silence and went on painting the sleeve of her portrait; it was of a little village child with a bunch of primroses and a sun-bonnet in her hand, and all her brown hair tumbling over her bronzed face. She could not understand Ellen Williams. She had spoken with such strange, unnatural composure, telling a story so fraught with misery and mistakes and evident mismanagement—a story, not of some stranger, but of a brother, an only brother; how was it possible? The words so measured and unsparing, had sounded heartless in the extreme; and yet Ellen Williams sat before her with her kind, womanly face upturned, belying any such verdict. At this moment her thoughts were evidently concerned in the matter of Margaret's head-ache and downcast looks.

"Ellen," said Margaret, with a sigh, and, after a long pause, "how did you get rid of your love for Jack?"

"How?" said Ellen, astonished. "Why, he drove it away himself, I suppose. If you had a sinful brother, you would stop caring for him, wouldn't you?"

"No, I don't think I should, Ellen." Margaret spoke gravely, almost severely. Then there was a pause again.

"Well, I don't know, I am sure," sighed Ellen. "Papa says we must not love what is given over

to the devil. I should love Jack if he were good again."

"Then you do not pray for your brother, I suppose?"

"Yes; I pray nearly every day."

"As you pray for all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics," said Margaret; and by this time her face was flushed enough. "It is the first time I have heard that Christ's religion is to love only those who love us, who are good and holy. I thought that law was out of date, Ellen, by eighteen hundred years and more."

Ellen did not speak, but opened and closed her hands upon her apron in silence. Presently Margaret broke out:

"Tell me once for all, Ellen,—putting aside the Bible, if you will——"

"But we must never do that," said Ellen.

"Tell me," continued Margaret, impatiently, and stopping painting altogether, while she fixed her eyes on her auditor, "if you think there is anything grand, or beautiful, or noble in such a creed? Spartan heroism was very well in its day and time; but now, in this country, in our time, have we not had a better way put before us?"

It was some time before Ellen replied. When she did so, she said:

"Papa says that God is perfectly just. If we are to be like Him, we must be just too, and not smile upon sin, but punish sinners."

"I have always understood," said Margaret, "that our pattern is God Almighty, as we see Him *in his Son*. We are setting ourselves a

great task if we aspire to that, Ellen, don't you think so?"

"Oh, yes," said poor Ellen, humbly.

"And I have never read of Him that He turned from people that were sinful—that He forbade them to approach Him. Rather, I have heard how He entered into a sinner's house, and allowed a woman that was a sinner to wash his feet."

"But they were penitent, were they not?"

"Ellen, if they had not had our Lord to go to in the exact moment of their penitence, how do we know they might ever have repented again? If we shut out those we love from us, how can we hope for any influence with them—how can we dare to hope for forgiveness ourselves?"

"But Jack was so often wicked," said Ellen.

"Not until seventy times seven, I think, Ellen. I don't mean to scold you, or to give you impertinent advice," and Margaret laid down her palette, and took a seat beside her guest; "but it grieves me to think you should look at your poor brother so—that you should look at Christ and God so, Ellen; for you are a good girl, I know, and you think all the while you are following Him. And you are not a child; you are twenty-two now—a woman; you could influence both Mr. Williams and your brother, and do such good."

"Ah, you have a brother who is good and clever: you cannot understand what a grief a brother can be. Papa told me——"

"Ellen, I have griefs that you don't know about; but do you know I would rather have

them, sore as they are, than have the hardness you feel to your brother. I wish I could think you grieved over poor Jack!"

But Ellen's face changed only from amazement to amazement, and perplexity to perplexity. Margaret felt she could not make her understand, and was sure that she too did not fully comprehend Ellen. And afterwards she blamed herself for the bitter way in which she had spoken. "It is not her fault, poor girl; it is the teaching of last Sunday's sermon that has gone on through her life. *Must* I listen to it again next Sunday?"

"Will you walk with me to Draybridge on Sunday?" asked Ellen, as if she interpreted her friend's thoughts, but that was far from poor Ellen. "There is service there at three o'clock, and papa is not going to preach here in the afternoon, and you would not care to hear the curate. He takes no pains now that he is going away. It is very wrong of him."

"Why is he going away?" asked Margaret.

"I don't know. We often change our curates. Papa is very particular, and he says young men nowadays are so lawless.

CHAPTER XV.

"Vulgar natures alone suffer vainly."
OWEN MEREDITH.

Margaret had well said that she had griefs of which Ellen could know nothing, of which no one as yet knew anything beyond Elspet's con-

Margaret.

jectures as to the cause of the continuous "head-ache" with which her mistress put her off from day to day.

"Aunt Marg'ret's got a pain on the top of her head," said the children, "and we mustn't make a noise."

These griefs seemed to increase instead of to lessen, and proportionately the "head-ache" increased. Gaspar's letters, at all times like angels' visits (in two senses so to his sister), had become more and more rare. The last, dated from Cairo, had treated entirely of expeditions to the Pyramids, and of a pamphlet which Gaspar purposed shortly to publish, to be entitled "Conjectures on the Structure and History of the Monuments of Egypt." Two publishers had, it may be mentioned, refused to risk its publication, and had advocated its appearance in some periodical. But Gaspar and the periodicals were not on terms which permitted of this, without something very like an apology, or a condescension, as he would have termed it, on the part of the author. And Gaspar Marshall did not know the grandeur of humility, nor the nobility of self-abasement. He had not learnt that next to doing good stands the virtue (if I may call it such) of allowing that one has done evil. Nor had he realised that on this troublous sea of life whoso sets himself in the trough of one wave, will find himself straightway on the crest of the next. He still held to the largest rooms at feasts, and it was more than he deserved that so seldom had he been called upon to "sit down lower."

Margaret was fully aware of what this fresh

scheme of publishing would entail. A large outlay to begin with, a return most uncertain, and at all events far distant. Then the subject would of necessity detain her brother abroad, and engross him to the hindrance of all other work, more fragmentary, but certainly attended by less risk and more emolument. And in the meantime affairs at home became more complicated, if the steady ebb of Margaret's slender resources could be said to complicate affairs.

Ellen Williams's visit had been paid on a Friday, and up to that time no answer had been returned to Margaret's letter of inquiry to Mr. Pickering. She had ceased to look for any, accepting it as a fact that he did not think her capable of giving lessons. And even if he could help her in this matter, how could it now be managed? There were certainly no pupils at Fernhill, and a distance of three miles from any station made the village more out of reach of London than many places at a greater distance. But the same fact lent to the little spot its charm, and left its rustic beauties and quiet undisturbed. So in this, Margaret, you have something to be thankful for after all. Neither for you nor the children would a gayer, more peopled suburb of the great city have done as well.

But sorrow sadly discolours the mind's eye, as does sickness so often discolour the eye of the body. With Margaret's uneasiness as to her brother, as to the very means of living, and her hopelessness as to the sale of her pictures, upon which it seemed to her she was lavishing in vain her life and strength, there came a miserable

and morbid tone upon her whole mind and the whole life she was leading, upon every thought, and as it seemed to her—for she was more or less aware of it—upon every word she spoke. Mrs. Hobson more vociferously than ever called her that “*sweet* young lady as never said ‘no,’ to nobody,” and Elspet’s “My poor pet lamb—dear heart of her!” might have been heard a thousand times in the ten minutes the good woman lay awake at night to puzzle over her mistress’s misfortunes, which, indeed, she looked upon as her own. Of Gaspar Margaret never spoke except in love and admiration, and seldom then. She had a feeling that Elspet thought hardly of him, and to any such she would never mention his name more than she was obliged. But Elspet knew well enough that the little coffer must be nearly empty, and that as yet little result had followed upon Margaret’s unceasing labours at her easel.

Who does not know too the strain upon mind and body that long-continued and earnest attention to any art entails? I mean where the soul is thrown into the endeavour to excel, to reach the perfection which, alas! is never reached. The anxiety, the dissatisfaction, the hope measured out as it were to lure on its victim, and not enough to uphold him in the struggle—the weariness, the impatience, the restlessness?

Mr. Pickering, I am aware, was seldom or never troubled with all these. But there was some lack in him, some link missing that is mostly bestowed where there is taste, and genius, and soul combined. Margaret, had she but considered

this, might have taken courage. She might have repeated what she had said a little bitterly to Ellen Williams, "I would rather have my grief than your hardness."

And comfort in another form, rather I should say in other words, awaited Margaret. Is it hackneyed, out of date, a popular delusion, to imagine that comfort can be taken from a sermon? So many things are popular delusions now that one becomes distrustful.

But before the comfort, came yet another trouble, the tidings from across the seas that James Marshall was dead. Margaret had not seen him for so long, he had entered so little into her existence, that she could not feel the loss keenly for herself. For the little ones, now orphans, was all her sorrow. She had known too well what it was to lack father and mother to think lightly of the trial that had come upon them, though little did they realise it now. Each little face puckered up into a cry when she first broke the news to them; but more from sympathy with the tears upon her own face than that they had grasped the fact. Dolly, hardest to comfort at the time, was soonest to forget; and for many days after Margaret noticed that Toto's face wore a sorrowful, earnest look that she had never seen before. She spoke to them frequently on the subject, anxious that they should neither conceal what grief they felt, nor look with awe and fear upon the messenger that had come amongst them. And that with the boy, at least, his father's words and memory had not passed away was obvious. One day—he had stood a long time

biting his drum-stick and staring out of the window with earnest eyes—he came up to Margaret, and taking hold of her locket said sorrowfully—

“Aunt Marg’ret, please to make me be called Charlie.”

“Why, darling?” she asked.

“’Cos papa called me that, and ‘Toto’s’ so baby. Papa said so,—and—and he’s gone away, and dead—and——”

He burst into a flood of tears, and laid his little head on Margaret’s lap. He was in the April of his days, and sunshine quickly succeeded showers, but he had his wish of being henceforth called Charlie.

I have said that on a certain Friday, and it was a Friday in May, Margaret had received no answer from Mr. Pickering. On the succeeding day, Saturday, he had, however, dropped a certain letter, with a certain remark, into a pillar-post in Bond-street. So that there is still hope for her, if she could but know it. The Indian letter in the meantime put all else out of her mind.

On the Sunday she did not go to church in the morning, but sent Elspet, and stayed at home herself with the children.

Such a happy morning it seemed to them, and very peaceful it was even to poor Margaret. They dragged a shawl on to the grass for her to sit on, and the big “picture Bible,” and other books were brought out. Then with an umbrella each, and one for their aunt, they sat down “in their tents,” as they said. “Let’s p’etend to be wild *hairy* men,” said Charlie, opening his eyes wide, “like Mr. Esau.”

Margaret read them many stories, and spoke to them of each one, and the lessons it held for them. But she did not plague them with learning much by heart. She herself had anything but pleasant associations with some of the most beautiful psalms and collects from the fact that they had been given her as tasks. Each child repeated a hymn and learnt a new verse or two during the morning. "You must say one to that lady who comes to see me, Charlie," Margaret said.

"Oh, Aunt Marg'ret," said he slowly and reproachfully, "she *isn't* a lady; you're a lady, 'cos you're my Aunt Marg'ret, but she's only a *woman*."

When Ellen Williams called for her companion on her way to Draybridge, Margaret thought it well to repeat and enforce her wish. Charlie was told to say, "Awake, my soul," which was supposed to be his master-piece. He raced through it, with his hands behind his back, in a sing-song voice, but fluently enough, till he came to the lines beginning "Improve thy talents," which he rendered, by way of variety, thus:—

"Reprove thy talents with due care,
For the big day thyself prepare."

"And isn't big, and great, and large *jest* the same, Aunt Marg'ret? you *said* they was *jest* the same, at my spelling."

Ellen Williams smiled faintly, and, as Margaret noticed, for the first time since they had known each other. When she returned from her room, having just put on her bonnet, she found her leading Dolly about by the hand, and quite at home with them.

"Aunt Marg'ret, why have you got on a black bonnet?" asked Charlie.

"Don't you know, Charlie?" she asked.

"Why haven't I got a black blouse, and Dolly? He's my papa and Dolly's."

"You will have them soon, darlings; they are not ready yet."

"Should you go out, Margaret," said Ellen, hesitatingly; "till you get your mourning."

"I need to pray and to hear a sermon more than usual, I think, Ellen," she answered, smiling sadly. "Elspet has lent me a black shawl, and the skirt and bonnet I had by me."

Elspet had secretly vowed she would never take the shawl back. "It's been laid by this ten years, and what's the good to the like of me?"

They had not opened the garden gate before the children were running and calling after them,—

"May we build with our bricks, Aunt Marg'ret?"

"Oh, no!" said Ellen unconsciously, and scared at the idea.

The children thought that Margaret had spoken.

"What, not if we build a *church*?"

The permission was given, for it seemed to Margaret that the angels themselves could hardly find more innocent amusements than did these children. She could not forbid them to chase butterflies, why should she forbid them play with bricks?

And she knew they really did believe they were to build a church.

CHAPTER XVI.

“God is all in all, or no God at all.”

GEORGE MAC DONALD.

The door of the parish church of Draybridge stood wide, and a soft May wind was toying with the elm branches that overspread the churchyard and the path. Butterflies fluttered and alighted on the yew-trees and on the graves, fit emblems of the resurrection of the Just; and a blue-winged swallow swept suddenly up the aisle, and beating itself an instant against the coloured window-panes, as suddenly turned affrighted, and finding itself once more free, rose with a jubilee of flight and chirruping into the warm blue air.

There is nothing more restful, I think, than an English country church on a summer's day. The cool carved stone, and the old oak benches, contrasting with the sunshine and the heat outside, the stillness within before the service has begun, or in the pauses of it, the life without seen through the open door—and what a pity it is when they close it!—the cows browsing on the village green, and the endless varieties and successions of light and shade upon the grass, or in the branches, or on the sandy path. Yet silence there too, with all its life; silence, because this is the day that the Lord hath made, —life, to rejoice and be glad in it.

There was a sycamore outside Draybridge church, no rival of the elm tree, but standing in noble solitude on the other side the path. It had hung out its green flower tassels daintily

from each little tent of down-dropped leaves, and the low, continuous, and melodious buzz of many bees stirred among it. Once or twice, laden to satiety, a large velvet "bumble" would like the swallow, sweep across the doorway, its muffled song waxing loud and then waning as it passed away. Margaret felt that her troubled mind was the only thing discordant in that place of holy calm, the only tuneless note in the universal hymn of praise.

It is a well-established fact (and no one who has ever realised God as a Father, and his soul as the work of His creative hand, can doubt it) that the soul has *seasons*—its cold winter, its chilly but hopeful spring, its noonday heat of summer, and its calm, sorrowful, yet patient autumn-tide. Time when, independently as it often seems of all external cause or circumstance, we sink into a callous, frigid, and immovable state from which it is impossible to arouse ourselves. For if we love God, we are aware of this lovelessness, and we are pained by the knowledge, if our love be true. It is a paralysis of the soul, when unable to feel or move, we yet feel keenly the *loss* of feeling and of motion.

Margaret, who was no saint (and had she been so, I doubt her escaping wholly the universal frost-bite), was passing through such a season now. For many days past she had knelt many times to pray, and had risen hard and loveless as before. It seemed to her that behind her many cares and much weariness God had hidden his face.

On this Sunday in church she felt that she

did not really pray. Each petition as she strove to drive it upwards fell to the earth, unheard as it seemed to her, unheard as it is possible it may in reality have been. His ways are past finding out: thank God it is so! If it were not so, He were indeed no God.

Once in the glorious Litany, with "strong crying and tears," she joined her voice and heart to that of the congregation.

"That it may please thee to defend and provide for the fatherless children . . . and all that are desolate and oppressed!"

But for the sermon she longed with an intense longing and an eager hope. Some new word, some blessed thought, might rouse her, and melt the stubbornness at her heart. Nay, she even prayed, with bent head when the prayers were ended and there was a pause of silence, that it might be so. When she raised her head, the clergyman who had read had given up his place in the pulpit to another.

A man rather above the middle height, with a face so thin and pale that Margaret stamped him immediately as an ascetic, rose from his knees, and from thin, firm lips gave out in a distinct and sonorous voice the text, "God with us."

He paused and looked quietly round the church. The faint colour that had been on his face when he rose from his knees died slowly away. He took up his handkerchief, passed it over his lips, and repeated, "God with us."

"Not to those," began the preacher, "who deny the existence of God, nor to those who would make for themselves a *private* god—I may use

the word, I hope, without irreverence, seeing that I can find no other to express my meaning—not to those who fashion to themselves a being whom *they* can understand, and strive to make Infinity finite—not to such would I address myself to-day.

“In our large towns and cities, where godlessness and open sin walk hand in hand, where atheism flaunts itself unshamed in the broadest light of day, and has its hundreds of disciples—it is our duty, as ambassadors for God, to protest against this open rebellion, this bold-faced disavowal of our King.

“But in this country church, in the midst of the fairest, freshest bounties of the Lord of all the earth, in the face of that smiling ever-praiseful nature in which you, my hearers, are set, I purpose more to speak to you of Him, than to endeavour to prove, what you can hardly dare to doubt—that He in very truth exists. Your presence here to-day assures me that my supposition regarding you is correct. I do not believe in such *dishonest* doubt as would bring men to their knees before a God in whom they do not believe, nor in such craven thralldom to the opinion of this world as would induce them to come, and to kneel, for the sake of that world merely, and its opinion.

“To you, therefore, to whom my text is familiar, I address myself. To you who have hitherto accepted the great truth which it contains. How it is accepted, in how limited a manner, and what influence the acceptation bears upon our life, I hope in turn to consider. Lastly, I would lay

before you the reasons I find for believing that we *may* accept it, in a very grand, and lofty and extensive sense.

“Firstly, then, how it is accepted. And I need not repeat that I mean by the avowed professors of Christianity. ‘God with us.’ Sometimes we have it as a text at Christmas. It then conveys to us the *remembrance* of the actual presence of our Saviour on the earth. According to our various dispositions or imaginations, the mind leads us from this point to other things. To the Babe in the manger, His mission, His sorrows, His death, to His ascension, when like a cloud He vanished from our sight; perhaps to the message He left for us about the ‘little while’—yet further, perhaps, to his coming again.

“Again, to some very simple minds, I believe to the mind of every child, the God who we are told is ‘with us,’ takes the form of a human being. Kind to the good, a punisher of the wicked, seated upon a throne, and following with a judicial eye the footsteps of all earth’s little children.

“Or again, do we not sometimes (some of us, I fear, at all times) view Him, as an abstract Being, ruling the universe perhaps, but quite apart from us men and our doings?

“Or as a fate, from which we cannot by any means escape?

“Or as perfect holiness without the element of love, failing which, holiness is no longer holiness?

“Brethren, the God of all the earth has mercy so vast that none dare exclude his brother from His presence, nor condemn any conception of

Him, so long as it savours not of irreverence and unbelief. But may we not hope to enlarge our own miserable and small conceptions? The age is progressing, science is progressing, all things are progressing around us: why, then, should belief wax cold, and our ideas of God alone remain stunted? Nay, they have shrunk and grown small, for David of all men had the most elevated and enlarged conception of his Creator and his Friend; and David lived a thousand years before Christ.

“And it is in this way that our ideas may be enlarged. By extending God *every way*, if so I may speak; not raising Him to that pinnacle of greatness at which He cannot reach us, but giving Him all *power* as well as all glory. And all power does not concern itself with mighty things alone, but with all things, small or great. He that could say, ‘Arise, take up thy bed,’ to him that could not rise, could also forgive all sin. He that made a universe can make a man to walk upon one small spot of that universe. Our Creator, and yet our Father and our Friend, our elder Brother and our King, our High Priest and the Lamb for sacrifice.

“But I anticipate; for I would now speak to you of the cold and meagre acceptation of this truth as shown by the *influence*—shall I say the lack of influence?—it has upon our lives.

“Do we believe in the continual presence of God when we use in common conversation the words ‘chance,’ ‘luck,’ ‘misfortune,’ ‘accident?’ If He is ‘with us,’ He is not a passive observer, I imagine, but an Agent, a Father, a directing hand.

“Do we believe in God’s actual presence when we speak of Him with irreverence, with distrust—when we drive His Spirit from the inner temple by lightness or by wilful sin?

“Do we believe that He is with us when we fret continually under a petty trial, under a trial of any sort or kind, and struggle restlessly to be free from that which He has suffered shall be for a little time our portion? Do we believe that the grave is in His hand, and that through the dark valley He leads us when we murmur and rebel (I do not say when we *mourn*, for to mourn is Christ-like and is blessed), that one whom we would have here is taken to a better country?

“My brethren, surely to believe is not to realise. We all believe that God is with us; how many realise it as a noble truth?

“But while I speak, a certain disease of man’s soul comes to my remembrance; and lest any in this place should now labour, or in bygone times have laboured, under it, I would, by the help of the God who is with us, speak a word of comfort and of hope.

“The disease I mean is an *inability to realise* the presence of God.

“You have all felt, my hearers, I am persuaded, more or less, aware of it or unaware, this torpor, this languor, this miserable searching for a God. you cannot find—a God who has heretofore been yours, who heretofore has heard your prayers, who never heretofore has failed you.

“I beseech you let not this cause you to despair—“He hath said, and shall He not perform?” ‘Be-

hold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

"In the meantime, it has pleased Him to turn away for a little His health-giving face. There is some purpose, believe me, in the grief, the stupor, that is yours. We cannot follow Him into the distance where His ever-lasting purposes are planned: we cannot, being finite, comprehend Infinity.

"But the faith that enlarges man's heart, and gives grandeur to his intellect, and nobility to his toil,—that faith which points to God as *in* all as well as *over* all, will carry you through even this prayerless, faithless season. The sickness it not unto death. The Master is not yet come into the house to heal: maybe, had thy faith been stronger, He had not waited, but had spoken words of healing from afar off. Now to wait for His touch, believing, is all that thou canst do. 'It is expedient that He has gone from thee, for a little while.' Only a little while. He cannot leave thee.

"The Master saith, 'Where is the guest-chamber that I may enter in?'

"'Even so come, Lord Jesus!'"

CHAPTER XVII.

"The heart of a man's like that delicate weed
Which requires to be trampled on boldly indeed,
Ere it give forth the fragrance you wish to extract."
OWEN MEREDITH.

Margaret turned out of the church with a heart softened and thankful, if not greatly comforted. But the very softening comforted: it was a comfort to feel hot tears coursing themselves over her face beneath her veil.

The sermon was too long to give in full, and neither can it here be done justice to, nor may it to others be acceptable as it was to Margaret. The preacher spoke, and it seemed he spoke specially to her of rest and patience; and as he spoke they seemed in measure to come back to her after a weary absence.

"I hope the dove will find a resting-place," said Margaret, "and not take fright at the confusion in my heart."

Ellen hung behind a moment to speak to some one she knew. When she rejoined Margaret she said:

"I have seen the clergyman, Margaret; he passed me quite close. I wonder who he is!"

"Then he is not the rector?"

"O no; the one who read is the rector. This is some stranger; but he must be very kind, he was talking to a blind man in the churchyard."

They walked on in silence for some time, making no comment on the sermon. Margaret felt that Ellen would not look upon it in the same light, and Ellen was evidently in no way impressed by it.

"If I could have a clergyman like that to talk to at Fernhill," thought Margaret, "I should be different from what I am now. He does not preach cold doctrine to repel us; and he would, from his own greatness, take pity upon sins, and failings, and weaknesses in others."

"If I were quite sure that Ann is not cooking those lamb-cutlets for dinner," thought Ellen, "we need not walk so fast. I want to keep them for to-morrow, and to have that half pigeon-pie to-day."

So was each in her way engrossed in meditation, till Margaret felt herself being stared at by Ellen's grey eyes.

"What is it, Ellen?" she asked.

"I was thinking how beautiful you look in mourning, Margaret; but you always look beautiful in anything."

Margaret laughed.

"How nice it must be," continued Ellen. "I wonder you don't make a picture of yourself sometimes. It would be prettier than that little rough girl of Woodward's you are doing. And you didn't even make her *tidy* to be done."

Margaret did not listen or hear; her eyes were fixed on a group coming towards them.

"The children!" said Ellen. And who's that with them?"

A man. For an instant a wild hope that Gaspar had come back brought the colour into Margaret's face. It faded out slowly, and a look of part anger part surprise took its place. What business had he to come, taking advantage of her loneliness, walking out to *meet* her, evidently quite at home?

On his part was all the embarrassment, as he said awkwardly, "How do you do, Miss Marshall?" and held out his hand.

It was Luke Carew.

Three make no company, it is said, yet, when at the rectory-gate Ellen Williams, in spite of Margaret's looks and words of entreaty, declared her intention of going home, and reduced the party, a further constraint seemed to fall upon the remaining two. Margaret walked rapidly, holding her head high, and compressing her lips, as was her habit when she was annoyed. Luke walked beside her, mostly in silence, now and then venturing a humble remark, or some thought for her welfare.

"You have got a headache, I am afraid?" he asked once.

"Not much more than usual, thank you," said Margaret. Then a long silence. He looked into the hedge and then shyly at Margaret; she looked up to the trees and the sky.

"I hope Mrs. Armytage is quite well?" said Margaret.

"Very well, thank you. I wish I could see you look as well." The voice here took a pathetic tone, and the large blue eyes grew plaintive.

If she had been lighter-hearted, Margaret would have been more cutting in her retorts. As it was, she could only be cold and distant. She was angry that Luke Carew had dared to come and see her. She could not doubt for what purpose he had come. In her comparative prosperity she had rejected him; did he think that poverty would drive her to his arms?

I cannot analyse a woman's feelings under these or any other circumstances; but certain it is, that to some minds, or in some phases of mind, devotion, and particularly *displayed* devotion, defeat their own purpose, and are more repulsive than acceptable. The abject misery and humiliation they see, jars perhaps with woman's preconceived notions of manliness and manly wooing. The wounds they have themselves inflicted (perhaps to prove the mettle of their victim), received in a spirit of patience and forbearance, or with ill-disguised pain, aggravate rather than soften or humanise. It is such a delicate question, and woman is so versatile and wondrous a creation, that no one can attempt to make a rule for her—shall I say subjection? But I fancy if man were more often, and at the right moment, to “frown and be perverse, and say them nay,” like Juliet, to take a leaf indeed from their own journal, he would more often be successful. Perhaps, some may say, this is not desirable. Luke Carew, however, was not of this mind.

There is a moment after all the tyranny, which I will allow it is, and the pleasures of that tyranny which I will allow exist, when woman sinks down exhausted by the use of her own weapons, and uses her power to raise whom she has cast down. Having driven her chariot in haste over her victim, she returns to bathe his wounds and to set him beside her. And of course that cures the wounds at once. Was such a moment coming for Luke? Ah, that was what he wanted to know.

He felt he looked very stupid, and the knowledge made him look more stupid still. Poor fellow,

he had been given his leave once; and yet it seemed to him that Margaret had not been so hard upon him then as she was to-day. He was as much relieved as she, when the children ran noisily out to meet them.

They made friends with him at once. He had been a sailor at one time, and retained much of the ingenuous, frank manner that sailors have. And he was very fond of children. But of these children, so part of Margaret and of Margaret's life, he became at once fond to foolishness. They led him all over the garden, picking Mrs. Hobson's wallflowers ruthlessly, and dancing round him in an ecstasy of delight. Charlie filled his pockets with pebbles, and Dolly indignantly turned them out. Every now and then he glanced furtively at the little up-stairs window and then at his watch: his train left at six o'clock for London, and he had three miles to walk. He thought Margaret was very long taking off her things. If he could but suppose that—

“Thinking which would please him best,
She took a lily or a rose.”

Alas, poor Luke! there seemed little chance for him of such a compliment; a half-compliment, I will say—for I fear, even before a spurned lover, woman loves to look her best.

Margaret above saw the pitiful upward look, and it hardened her all the more. She moved from the window, and sat down on the edge of her bed. There she remained till common courtesy compelled her to come down and appear at the glass door of the small sitting-room. At the

first sound of her footstep Luke Carew left the children and approached her. He made an effort to pass into the room, and she was obliged to retreat a step to enable him to do so.

"I have asked for some tea," she said, standing up tall and pale, and cold as ever in the doorway. She was determined not to sit down. "You have a long walk to the station."

Surely that was hopeful: she used an expression approaching to kindness.

Luke Carew did not answer. He was sitting in an arm-chair (*the* arm-chair of the little room, for his love had for a moment made him forget his manners), his hands clasped so tightly that they were white as ivory, and his sunburnt face bent

Would his silence, the misery he was enduring, and which Margaret *must* see,—would it move her to pity? He raised his eyes, for how could he long keep them from her?

She had never looked to him so beautiful. Her white, clear-cut features against the blue sky, the tall figure in black, so lithely shaped and symmetrical, the white hand upon the window-pane, with the blue veins standing out upon it. Above all, the sad, careworn, piteous expression of long-suffered distress and sorrow about the large appealing eyes. This sight and this sorrow, and his helplessness to intervene between the last and her, were too much for Luke's self-command. He did the best thing that could have been thought of; he used the weapons that had so mastered him, and threw himself upon her compassion.

Had he knelt to her, taken her hand, surprised

her with a volley of reproach or entreaty, she would have rebelled against the liberty and cast him off. As it was he sat still, only that he moved his hands, and covered his face with them.

There was such despair in this quiet movement, that Margaret looked round. His bowed shoulders were heaving in an agony of emotion, but he did not say a word.

In a moment fresh colours fell upon everything, because Margaret was moved to pity. She had been cruel, hard, even uncourteous to him, and in return for what? For the most disinterested love that man had ever given. She, penniless, miserable, and alone, was wooed by a man rich in mind as in purse—for till to-day Luke Carew had never known stupidity—and she returned his offering with scorn and contempt.

The hands moved themselves a little; he moved his knees too as if he suffered even bodily pain: and I am sure he did; such tension and mental suffering extends farther than the mind.

“Margaret!” he said “O Margaret, Margaret!”

Not as a call to her, not as a reproach, only with a wail of despair in it that wrung her heart. It is too much for most women; I know it was too much for Margaret.

“Mr. Carew!” she said gently, and it sounded to him as if heaven opened and an angel spoke. There was such a look of expectant hunger in his face when he looked up, that Margaret was almost frightened. He began to rise.

“Please sit still,” said she quickly, “and listen to what I am going to say. I want you to forgive me for having been rude and scornful to

you. I know what you are doing when you ask me to be—your wife. I know that you have got over your pride, which I wounded last year. I know that you are stooping, as no one else would stoop perhaps, and—oh, indeed you don't know how unhappy I am! it is that that helps to make me rude to you. I don't know why it is I am so stony. I cannot love you yet."

"Oh, Margaret, did you say *not yet?*" And there came a glory of sunshine all over his face, as if she had said, "I love, and love, and love you."

Margaret wanted to answer: she wanted to say, "I don't know if I shall ever be able to love you; but I grieve for you in my very heart." She wanted to say, "Gaspar is away, and I have not heard from him." She wanted to say everything of her misery, except that she was very poor. But she broke down instead, and said nothing. She held her handkerchief to her face and cried like a little child.

There come ridiculous episodes in the greatest dramas of life. Luke Carew was going down on one knee with a vague wild desire of thus comforting Margaret, when a patter of feet brought him to his own. Margaret escaped lest the children should see her tears.

"What was you doing to my Aunt Marg'ret?" said Charlie. "Was you saying your prayers?"

"Something very like it," said Luke to himself; but "What have you done with the boat I gave you?" he said to the children. His face looked like a summer day after a thunderstorm—some of the trouble left, but a deal of glory shining through.

“O we’ve got it here in the tub, come and see.”

“O do come,” said Dolly, pouting her red lips out of her white sun-bonnet, and waggling her stiff newly-washed frock behind her, as they darted like sun-winged dragon-flies into the garden.

“Here, in the garden,” they called shrilly; and Luke followed them, moving his head backwards and forwards, and up and down, as if he had just recovered from a stiff neck, and thinking what a beautiful day it had become all of a sudden.

“What have you got for sailors, eh?” he asked, not caring the least for the answer.

“Look here! two jolly blue-bottles. That’s Aunt Marg’ret, and that’s you. Hallo!” and they both gave a scream of delight. Aunt Marg’ret’s tipped you in the water.”

Luke did not like the omen; but he was too happy to be daunted so easily. “They will fly away,” said he.

“O no; don’t ye see we’ve cutten off their wings, so they only jest climb up and down like sailors. Aunt Marg’ret’s *sech* a good sailor.”

The garden gate clicked, and Ellen William’s brown hat came up between the lilac and the row of wallflowers. Luke Carew sighed. Margaret up-stairs thanked God. She feared another *tête-à-tête* more than she could say.

She ran down cheerful and bright, with red marks round her eyes, but a lighter heart. She would be very careful in her behaviour. What had she said or done when she cried? How *could* she cry before Luke Carew? She would be quite at her ease now, neither cold nor too friendly.

She showed him her latest picture of the little village girl, with the brown hair and the prim-roses.

His eyes sparkled over it. "How beautiful," said he, in a low earnest voice. Has Pickering seen this? I suppose not.

"But it is not finished," put in Ellen apologetically. "You have not made the hair tidy yet, Margaret. What a pity you did not tell me in time, and her mother would have put it in curl papers."

Margaret smiled. Luke Carew smiled too, but not at Ellen. Some happy thought of his own, I think, for his eyes followed Margaret.

The tea came; the time ebbed away, and so did the tea. But Ellen Williams sat on steadfastly, perhaps a little owing to the fact that Margaret held her hand. She liked having her hand held by Margaret.

"I must go," said Luke at length with a sigh. By the way, he had said it at least six times before.

"I hope you will not be tired after your long walk," said Margaret, rising.

"Good-bye," said he, and wrung her hand as he turned away.

"You have forgotten Miss Williams, Mr. Carew." said Margaret, smiling.

Oh, Luke Carew, where are your manners gone to? He had certainly forgotten Ellen Williams.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The scorn of the nations is bitter,
But the touch of a hand is warm."

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

Honest Ellen Williams had no idea of circumlocution either in speech or action.

"I think that gentleman would like to marry you," she said, gravely, to Margaret, as soon as Mr. Carew had gone away.

Margaret laughed.

"I don't wonder in the least," said Ellen; "if I were a man I should have married you long ago."

"But suppose I would not have you, Ellen?" asked Margaret, amused.

Ellen started. That had not struck her as a possibility.

"If I were a man you would have me," said she.

"Do you think all women are bound to accept the first man who offers to them, Ellen?"

"I think I thought so. I never thought about it much. Only I thought—two people were brought together and liked each other, and then they married. Isn't that the way, Margaret?"

"Sometimes, not always. You have never read any novels nor any poetry, Ellen?"

"No: papa does not like novels at all."

"I am afraid he has good cause for his dislike, Ellen; but there are some good and pure novels, better and purer than much of real life. And good poetry is the purest thing of all. Do you think you might read poetry with me?"

"Oh, I think so. Papa only dislikes it when

it is bad. I always learned Watts's Hymns when I was a little girl."

"Those are songs," said Margaret, "and addressed to God. Poetry, if it describes life, must touch upon sin as well as upon holiness; I mean, it must not ignore its existence. If it ignores what does exist, it cannot hope to remedy it, nor to raise man above it. You go and see the poor, Ellen. Don't you find good there mixed with evil, and evil with good?"

"Oh, yes," said Ellen.

"It would not be life, as we know it, if it were not so; and if you refused to see the evil, you could not cure it, could you? It is just so with the highest and noblest poetry. It is a plant that grows up from the earth and spreads its topmost branches into heaven."

Ellen gave a mystified sigh.

"Will you come again to-morrow afternoon, and read to me while I paint? I have so little time for reading now, and I love it so."

"Of course I will come, dear Margaret," said Ellen, earnestly. "And I hope you will look happier after I have read."

She evidently looked upon it as a dose to be administered for the re-establishment of her friend's mental health; enjoyment to be derived from it for herself poor Ellen did not for a moment dream of.

"I know a girl that did not marry the man that asked her," said she, after a pause, her mind having wandered back to the old subject; "but then she liked a man her father did not like, and that was very wrong, of course."

"Was he a bad man?" asked Margaret.

"I don't know. He was a sailor, and Mary Green's father did not want her to marry a sailor; he wanted her to marry a miller at Shingledown. She said she would not, and Green came to papa about it. I don't know what papa said to her, but she came, and went away crying. She has never sung in the choir since, and she has never come to the sacrament. I think she goes to another church now, or to chapel."

The wild hope of making Ellen love poetry, or understanding anything beyond bare matter of fact, faded from Margaret's breast. Obedience is good, disobedience is bad: Mary Green was disobedient, therefore she is bad. That was about the extent of Ellen's argument and conclusion.

Every day Margaret became more puzzled as to the conduct of Mr. Williams, and more distressed at its results. For who that knows aught of Christianity, who that follows in the steps of the Divine Leader, can see unmoved His teaching abused, His holy name so taken in vain? Had Mr. Williams been a careless, uneducated man, without position, or power, or influence, and claiming for himself no credentials from the God of Love, as teacher and pastor over His people, his lack of charity and his ill-judgment would probably have affected few beside himself. But coming in the name of Love to give so unloving verdicts! Coming in the name of Peace to create, by his mistaken notions of justice, discord and disunion! Margaret could not comprehend it; she could only grieve.

His talents were indisputably of a high order;

his theological studies laborious and unceasing; his doctrine, save where love was concerned (considered merely, I mean, as bare *doctrine*), was unimpeachable. But love is the fulfilling of our law. Where love is not, what remains? Certainly not Christ, whose essence is love, whose rule is love, whose reward is love. The worshippers of mere humanity had well taught Mr. Williams a noble lesson. How are motive and action disunited in this weary, jarring world! They in action lacking the divine motive—the divine impulse; he with that motive lacking the consequent action. When motive and action are alike divine, then is humanity most human, because most God-like. The Finite merged in the Infinite—what better can we hope for, O my brothers?

Margaret marvelled and grieved; some others in the parish grieved and marvelled too. But for the most part anger and bitterness against the poor, ill-judging man swallowed up all other feelings. Yet a few remained, alas! to lay upon the Almighty Being the sins and offences of this prophet that was called by His name.

There seems to me no solution of the problem if it be not here:—

“Men shrink more from skin diseases than from any other. . . . And they are amongst the hardest to cure; just as the skin diseases of the soul linger long after the heart is greatly cured. Witness the petulance, fastidiousness, censoriousness, social self-assertion, general disagreeableness of so many good people—all in the moral skin—repulsive exceedingly.”

The words are George Mac Donald's, and are

spoken in his "Miracles of our Lord" with regard to the cure of the leprous man. But he has something yet to say:—

"I say *good* people; I do not say *very good*, nor do I say Christ-like, for that they are not."

If this, I say, be not in some degree a solution of the existence of such men and of such conduct as Mr. Williams's, I know of no other. Holding fast to the letter, it seems possible to forget the spirit. From all hardness of heart, good Lord, deliver us!

On this very Sunday evening, after Ellen Williams had taken her leave, the enigma and the scandal—for it now assumed proportions in no way short of a scandal—presented itself to Margaret and others in the little parish anew.

"Oh, miss!" said Mrs. Hobson, running in, and flicking tears off each cheek with each hand, "Carter's wife's so awful bad, and they wants you to look in a minute."

This "Carter's wife" had long interested Margaret. They had met in a cowslip field, where each had brought her little ones to play and to pick the sweet, maizy blossoms with which the ground was carpeted; and while the children played, Margaret had talked to the pale young woman with the paler baby on her knees, and had elicited from her her story.

None but those who have made the poor their friends can possibly be aware of the pathos and poetry that run through the humblest and most changeless of their lives. We are too used to take one end of a truth, and to console ourselves with the idea that lack of culture and a rough

life blunt the affections, and allow of nothing but commonplaceness. It is true—and thank God it is so!—that in many cases the poorer and most sorely tried of our sisters and our brothers appear indeed to lack our finer feelings and our higher and acuter sensibilities. Living from hand to mouth, as they do; huddled together, as they too often are; used to look upon want, or at least the scantiest of subsistences, as their normal condition—a tax they must pay for living—is it possible that their feelings should have the play we give to ours? is it possible that they should *go on* living if it were so? We fret over the loss of a single luxury, and make it a misery; we fume over disappointments that a week after are forgotten; we wrinkle our white foreheads over merest trifles. Carry this “fine sensibility” into the life of the poor. There is no place for it. Either the possessor must succumb, or the finer sensibility must make away. God wishes His poor to live. He chooses the last alternative.

And yet we know that amongst them are many whose feelings are, heavens know, keen enough, ay, too keen, for the struggles apportioned to them. Carter’s wife was one of these.

She had married at sixteen, she said. “I’d have knowed my mind better a year later, miss,” was her comment; “but John’s been a good lad to me all through; and I has never been a good wife to him, miss—oh no!” And then the tears rolled down her thin cheeks. Such a sad face it was, with the look of youth shining through the sadness and the cares of what should have been an older life.

Little by little Margaret persuaded her to tell all her grief. Her husband had loved another girl before he had wooed her; and the sting of this rankled yet in the poor feebly-proud spirit. "He don't care for 'Lizabeth now, miss—it's not that; I don't think he never was so very sweet upon her—leastways, he says he warn't. But I was very young, miss, when he took me; and I cared more for my fam'ly than for him—that was it. And I used to go down of an evening, and when he came home from his work; then the house was empty, and I was away at father's. He was very patient were poor John for a while. So thinks I, '*He* don't care if I'm out or if I'm in.' And when old Mrs. Johnson says, 'Jeanie girl, what does poor John do without you? My old man, he wouldn't spare me—not 'alf an hour.' 'Oh,' says I, and shakes my 'ead very sarcy, 'it don't make no odds to John where I be; and Joe, he do miss me of a evening.' (I al'ays had a book for Joe, miss, of a evening, and I'd read him till he fall asleep. And I were *very* much took up with Joe, miss, not having no mother, and Joe being the only brother I had since poor Bob died.) And then John, he gets angered, and says he, 'You ain't no wife to me, Jeanie. I thought you'd 'ave cared a little better for me nor you do. But I learns to get on very well now of a ev'ning.' And, oh, miss! I comes home one night, and I finds John wild with drink; and all along of me, that druv him to the public. So, after that, I stops at home; but John won't stop. 'Oh,' says he, 'my girl, 'you've had your lark of a ev'ning, and now I'll take mine.'

"He warn't no better till I was took ill. When the boy were born, John comes very down-faced to the bed, and says he, 'Jeanie, I've been a beast to you, my poor girl; but now we won't have no more words, but we'll be as 'appy as we can. It 'ut be a shame for the little son there, if he growed up to hear us a-wrangling, like we've done, or a-keeping apart from each other, like we've done.'

"I were very weak then, miss, and I couldn't do nothing but cry; and I thought John should 'ave kissed me, and John he thought I should 'ave turned to 'ave kissed him. And so we didn't do it, and John he goes away out at the door. And I lies there, and thinks I, 'John should have axed *me* to forgive him, and not said no more as to *my* doings, and me lying here.' And so I got angered again with John."

After that, Mr. Williams had been called by some officious neighbour to decide the chronic dispute between man and wife.

"'Mrs. Carter,' says he, very dry, 'you're a headstrong and imprudent young woman. I advise you to read the fifth chapter of Ephesians, and for the future to obey your husband. It is very sad to hear of so much ill-feeling between a man and his wife.' It *were* sad, miss, very sad; only he don't try to mend it, not he. 'Good morning,' says he, very dry, and looking that set-up with goodness as I could 'ave 'it 'im."

"And, oh, miss," she said on a later day to Margaret, as she rocked the sickly baby (of eighteen months old, but that looked like a child of six months) with her foot, and ironed her

husband's shirts at the same time on the clean deal table, "it's you as made us see as *all* good people isn't set-up, and it's you as made it square a-tween John and me. And now we *is* comfortable, miss; and no mistake."

Margaret had grown red at the simple avowal of gratitude; but she could not hide from herself the fact that Jeanie's account of her changed condition was true, and that she had been the apparent means of bringing it about. Need I say that such compliments and such convictions did in nowise affect Margaret, save as a cause of thankfulness that she too had found work to do for God and her fellow-men—save as an incentive to try again and again?

Still waters run deep. Very poor souls they must be truly whose surface is more than ruffled by the passing breeze of praise or gratitude. A true soul will accept its reward humbly, and reject what is over and above its merits as unworthy of an instant's thought.

It pained Margaret not a little to find on her arrival at Jeanie Carter's on that Sunday evening when Mrs. Hobson had called her, that Mr. Williams had again been planting thorns in the poor little woman's pillow. A week before twin boys had succeeded the sickly "baby" who had seemed to need all her care. *He* was now promoted to the rank of a walking member of the family, and a little girl of five was guiding his uncertain legs from chair to chair, pulling his arms rather roughly for such delicate sockets as seemed to hold them, in the hope of hastening his very necessary independence.

Margaret had seen the mother on the Friday before, doing well, and as proud of the two little strangers as if they were the first that had greeted her mother's eyes. Now she was tossing painfully too and fro—moaning softly to herself, and hardly noticing the little flannel bundles beside her.

Margaret laid her cool hand on the fevered hand thrown across the pillow. "What is it, Jeanie?" she asked.

John Carter had got a "job" in a neighbouring village, but it would keep him away "several days over a fortnight;" and one of the babies was sickly. John had gone at his wife's request to ask the curate to baptize them both at once, and in the house. The curate had applied to his rector, the rector had applied to the nurse. "Was the child in imminent danger?" "No, they could not say so; but the mother was very anxious for it, and the father going away."

Mr. Williams levelled his spectacles at Jeanie Carter's pale face, for he had come down to inspect her in person. "You seem very convalescent, my good woman," said he, "and the child will probably thrive. I prefer to have the Church services performed in church, and, except in cases of imminent danger, I never deviate from this rule."

Jeanie Carter did not know what deviate meant. She listened hopefully lest there should still be a chance. Her weak state increased her natural fears threefold; she was now certain that the sickly twin would die. She had vague notions of what would happen should it die unbaptized:

but John had said, "No good would come of it for the babby."

"My good woman, Mrs. Carter," continued the rector, "keep yourself quiet, and trust that Providence will spare you and your two children to come to church, where I shall be glad to baptize them, using the public office as ordered in the rubric. If this child should become dangerously ill, you will please be so good as despatch a messenger to me: in that case I will, of course, baptize it here."

Would Mr. Williams baptize it in the church to-morrow afternoon? John would go up, and a neighbour. That would make her so happy.

But Mr. Williams would not baptize in this manner, opening the church on purpose—defeating the object of a public service, in fact. From this he never deviated.

When would the church be open for a public service.

Mr. Williams was distressed to find that Mrs. Carter was not already aware that no festivals occurred during this week. The church would be open on Sunday as usual, at eleven o'clock.

The nurse was going to-day; they could not afford to keep her longer: John also was going, for the "job" was too good to be refused now that two more mouths had come to drain the resources. Jeanie and her children were to be dependent on the occasional kind offices of a neighbour. The sickly twin lay there moaning as if it would moan its little life away. The rectory was a mile and a half off—too far for any of the children to be sent as messengers.

Before such deaths as that of the puny baby a very short warning, if any, is given. Since Jeanie had known Margaret she had begun to think a great deal of that other part of us which is not to pass away as does the body—that is to live elsewhere forever; and “for-ever” is a long word to wiser folks than Jeanie. She cared for the welfare of the soul of that little week-old baby as she would have cared for her own. It was not her fault if superstition overcame even her trust in God. She believed that He had given it, and that He would take it away if so it pleased Him; but she did not believe that He could accept the will for any deed, and that it was below Him to visit upon her baby to everlasting the uncharity of Mr. Williams or the force of circumstances. Others view God as did Jeanie: how they can love Him I hardly know.

I am glad Margaret came to the rescue with her calm, patient ways, and her clear, pure faith, and her comforting womanly presence.

CHAPTER XIX.

“Now I would stay; God bids me go.
Now I would rest; God bids me work.”
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

Margaret awoke on the following morning with the wearied brain-racked sensation of having spent her night in the attempt to solve a problem. Not a very abstruse problem, certainly, and one

she had puzzled over before; namely, Mr. Williams and his conduct in general, but more especially in the case of young Mrs. Carter and the moaning baby. Very late the night before Margaret had left the cottage to return home, leaving her patients quieted by a sleeping draught and refreshed by a well-aired room. They had slept better, no doubt, than she had, for Jeanie summed up the matter much as Ellen Williams would have done in her place, by deciding that "the parson warn't a right sort of a parson, after all," and that Miss Marshall had "come a-tween them like a angel, as she is;" and then she had turned her weary head to the wall, and had fallen asleep. Whereas Jeanie's "angel" had paced slowly home meditating upon the simple recital of the poor young mother, corroborated by the indignant nurse, till she began to hate Mr. Williams for bringing Christianity into so great a disrepute, in a spirit that was itself in nowise Christian.

This she soon discovered; and then, as she lay upon her bed and bandied arguments from herself to herself, and from herself to Mr. Williams, the confines of good and evil grew misty and obscure, and with the grey stealing-in of dawn she fell into a troubled sleep.

"Aunt Marg'ret, Aunt Marg'ret, please awake; here's some letters for you, and Elspet says breskut is jest ready."

The words woke Margaret with a start. The addresses of the envelopes laid upon the bed so fascinated her, that she forgot to give and take the usual morning kiss from the sweet, fresh face beside her bed.

"May I open one, Aunt Marg'ret?" said Charlie.

"And me one!—and me one!" echoed Dolly.

She gave them two and opened the third herself in haste. The envelope was smeared.

It was from Mr. Pickering, and the purport brought the blood into her cheeks. She had asked him weeks before if he thought her fit to give lessons in drawing and painting. She had no answer, and little by little the disappointment had worn off, and the hand-to-mouth manner of living had become, as it does to the poor, a habit, and so was no longer terrible as it had been at first. Small sums had fitfully come in from James Marshall's executors at her earnest request, and there was the promise of a small but certain sum, to be paid in yearly. Naturally this was the property of the children, and personally could not materially assist Margaret; but to know that with care *they* need not lack was everything to her. Her hundred a year, entrenched upon from time to time by Gaspar (and so willingly parted with in his service), and shared too with the good Elspet, gave her a roof of some sort, just kept starvation from their door. She was not particular about most things now. You know she never cared whether her tea were "black," as Elspet said, or not. Even in the old days of comparative luxury, so scrupulous was her sense of honesty and honour, that she had no intention of repaying to herself from the children's pension the considerable sums they had already cost her. James had not desired this in his will. Nay, she was certain that he had considered that his children were on a *visit*

to their uncle and aunt up to the time of his last illness, when he was able to make some small provision for them.

Now, an answer to the old letter had come; here it is:—

“DEAR MISS,—I hope there’s no offence. Haven’t had opportunity to further your wishes till now; so didn’t trouble you. Mrs. Something or other—with a flourish you know—and a fat purse, she wants a teacher of our divine art immediately, if not sooner. Ain’t quite in my line, so I recommended ‘my pupil, Miss Marshall,’ and all the rest of it you know, &c., &c., &c. Send an answer, stating terms, to address enclosed. They seem in a hurry, you see—swell folks generally are. One would think poor beggars’ time (like us) were put up at auction for them. Well, you bid sharp, that’s all. My missus is kicking up a row, to which—as I’m addressing a lady—I won’t add an adjective just at present. So no more, dear Miss, from,

“Yours faithfully,

“J. P.

“P. S.—If you’ve any bits of stuff, heads or anything, ready, send them sharp to me. We’re off in three days’ time. The missus knows where—I’m certain I don’t.”

The second letter was from Gaspar; *his* second letter, too, for he had only written once before since he left England. Grandiloquent, unsatisfactory, and evasive, Mr. Pickering’s boorish production put it to shame. There was the true

ring about the lead of the latter; the other had the tinkle of spurious gold. Gaspar was tired of the East, though he did not say so, and gave some other and more plausible reason for making his way into Europe again. Poor Margaret! the letter gave her great joy though it held out no hopes of his return home; so it fulfilled its mission.

The third was a lawyer's letter. Need I say that it was like all lawyer's letters, fifteen superfluous words to every one necessary, and therefore for some time wholly unintelligible? Margaret marvelled that the puny sum left to the children could possibly afford room for so much ambiguous eloquence and wordy nothingness; for, of course, the letter in no way expedited payment or settlement of any sort. Three or four more would be coined to effect that; and I am not sure that it would be effected then. There is no saying that a word on the margin of the said will and testament of the said James Marshall may not disinherit Charlie and Dolly forever, and prove unmistakably to certain said lawyers (or gentlemen) that the said James Marshall meant his said will to be read in exactly the opposite sense to what he intended when he wrote it.

As Margaret dressed herself, and combed and plaited her long brown hair before the glass, she tried to picture to herself the new phase of life into which she was about to enter. She had always been poor, but hitherto she had always had freedom. Perhaps it was only human nature to shrink a little from what she had before so

much desired. She desired it now: only it had become of a sudden so near, so real; she could not help wondering if the reward would be worth the ordeal.

"Anything will be worth, at any cost," she answered impatiently to herself, as she tossed up a long flake of hair on the comb, and plaited it with quick, nervous fingers. "Anything that helps Gaspar, and makes me independent. And, after all, it is only for a few weeks."

So she flung up the window as high as it would go, and a great honey-bee came booming in, laden with spoils and sunshine. It settled on her shoulder, and Margaret let it rest there till she got down-stairs, when she lifted it off carefully on to a *Gloire de Dijon*, on the hot brick-wall. The summer had come in real earnest; despite a certain fear and a certain sorrow at leaving her little ones, it seemed to Margaret that the summer had crept into her heart too, as well as into the heart of the rose. She gave a sigh, part anxiety, part happiness, and part thankfulness for the new blessings of the day, and then she turned into the dining-room, where Charlie and Dolly were catching blue-bottles behind the blinds.

There was a great scene in small Fernhill that day. Margaret broke the plan of teaching to Elspet.

"He stoppin' away, and you a-goin' out teaching! Well, Miss Marg'ret, to think as I would live to see this day! If master don't turn in his grave at Kensal Green Symmeterry, I don't know *what'll* make him turn! A-goin' out *teaching*! O Miss

Marg'ret, my dear, you're only a-poking fun at me! Tell me it's only fun, Miss Marg'ret, my dear lamb! O my—this'll be the death of me!"

It was vain to try and impress Elspet with the "dignity of work." She had certain prejudices, with which she had lived and grown up, and part from them she could not. As a desperate resource she dragged in Gaspar's name: at other times she maintained a profound and contemptuous silence with regard to him and his opinions.

"What'll Mister Gaspar say, Miss Mar'gret?" she asked.

"I don't know what he will say," said Margaret sadly; "but go I must, Elspet. I have been striving for work these months past; and when it is offered to me, do you think I shall refuse it? You ought to know, Elspet, how ill I can afford to be proud."

To this Elspet made no answer. Ominous sniffs and significant sighs sounded through the house all day as she went about her business. After this she gave herself up to calm resignation and the concoction of some palatable story to be offered to Mrs. Hobson—with a view to further and extensive currency in the village—in explanation of Margaret's lengthened absence.

That Margaret would not herself be cautious, Elspet knew well enough. She therefore determined that for no shortest period of time should Mrs. Hobson and her mistress be alone together. A handle of the door needed polishing at that precise moment, or an extra rose was brought in to adorn the vases, or Margaret's presence was imperatively needed elsewhere. Margaret's

movements village-wards were nervously watched; but, blessedly for Elspet's peace of mind, her mistress was too busy at home during those last days, to allow more than a hurried visit to Jeanie Carter and one or two of her poor friends. So Elspet's agonies were as few as possible.

Ellen Williams came of course to see her friend; it was on the day after the arrival of the important letters. Margaret was drawing busily, and packing a finished picture for Mr. Pickering.

Ellen proposed to read some poetry.

"Oh do," said tired Margaret, as she hammered the last nail into the little case, and began painting in the address in large black letters.

"What shall I read, Margaret?"

"Look on the table, Ellen, and choose something."

Margaret started from the floor. There were one or two books that she felt she had rather not see in Ellen's hands, that she would rather not hear in Ellen's voice.

She had time to save some of them. The first volume of the "Earthly Paradise," "The Idylls of the King," Mr. Browning's poems; last, but not least, a Shakspeare.

"Now," said she, putting them aside, "read any of the others, Ellen."

She read "The Lord of Burleigh," just as she would have read a column of spelling.

"He told a lie," said she. Why did he say he was a landscape-painter?"

Then she took up "Enoch Arden." She knew the story of this, she said, except the end.

Some one had told it to her. Might she read the end aloud to Margaret?

"The end" was from the marriage of Annie to Philip Ray.

"Oh, Margaret!" was her comment, "how could she marry till she was quite sure the other one was dead?—why did she not send Philip to see?"

It required all Margaret's patience and self-control to leave the book in her hands. But poor Ellen went on with such placid monotony, and such supreme unconsciousness of her own lack of appreciation, that Margaret had not the heart to be severe.

"Why didn't he knock at the window, stupid man?" was her comment as she closed the book. "Then he would have got back his wife, and taken the shop again, and been quite comfortable."

Margaret fairly laughed. "And poor Philip, Ellen?" she asked.

"Philip? O, he might have been their friend still; or Enoch might have been angry with him, and told him to go and set up for himself in the city or somewhere. He deserved to be punished; he did very wrong, you know, Margaret."

One more poem finished Margaret's trouble and patience.

"We were two daughters of one race,"
she began—"I wish I had a sister, like this person—")
At

"As half asleep his breath he drew,
Three times I stabb'd him thro' and thro',"

Ellen opened her eyes wider and wider.

“I wrapt his body in the sheet,
And laid him at his mother’s feet.
O the Earl was fair to see!”

—“Oh, Margaret!” she said, without a pause or drawing a breath, “his mother should have sent for a policeman. Did she?”

Margaret wrote to the given address, and proposed Friday for her arrival at Beauchamp Towers. An answer, signed Lydia Beauchamp, arrived in due time, and informed Miss Marshall with some ceremony that she would be met at the station on the day and at the hour she had named. What her precise duties were to be she hardly knew, but no doubt she would find out in good time.

Meanwhile Elspet and Ellen and many others in the village bemoaned sadly Margaret’s absence-to-be.

The children till the last morning had come did not bemoan it at all. How should they? It would make such a nice change; it gave them such grand opportunities of “making surprises” against Aunt Margaret’s return. She watched them often deep in consultation, Charlie orator, and Dolly audience. Then the motion would be carried *nem. con.*, and they would scamper off in a flutter of excitement and zeal to carry out the new plan.

Sometimes it was a mud-pudding, profusely decorated with green peas, ruthlessly extracted from the unwilling pod. Sometimes a larder was arranged in which costly and inviting viands

were spread or hung for the consumption of imaginary mortals whose home was in a neighbouring grotto, scooped out by Charlie's busy spade.

Margaret was asked to come and see it once. She did not quite know whether to laugh or to be angry. On the shelves, made of stripped cabbage stalks, and arranged with great ingenuity on twigs stuck into the ground, was arranged a row of mutilated flies.

"Charlie!" said Margaret, reproachfully, "did you really kill those flies to make pretence for a few hours?"

Charlie had a very red face already from his hard labours, but it got a good deal redder. His hat was on the back of his head, his brown curly hair was tumbled upon his forehead. He lifted up his large eyes to Margaret's face, but they fell instinctively.

"O no, Aunt Marg'ret. I only deaded them a little, so as they couldn't run away."

"We only deaded 'em a little, Aunt Marg'ret," echoed Dolly, her white sun-bonnet almost touching the earth as she bent in eager housewifely solicitude over her preserves.

"And the worms, Charlie, did you kill them?"

Four shrivelled carcasses of what had once been worms were suspended by threads, tied round their bodies from "beams" placed across the model larder.

"O no!" said Charlie, "I *never* killed them, Aunt Marg'ret. I jest hanged them up for bacon, and then they jest died. There's *plenty* more, Aunt Marg'ret, in the beds."

"There are plenty more little boys, Charlie," said Margaret, trying to look stern. "So perhaps you won't mind being hung in the sun by a rope till you die."

She did not pursue the subject further at that time; but in the evening they went for a last walk with her through the fields, and to the neighbouring wood.

Hands filled with white orchis and tall ox-eye daisies and fern, and sundry erratic excursions up banks and over hedges on the part of Charlie, did not preclude the most sober conversations. They stayed out late enough to see the evening star rise pale and silvery in the June sky.

"It's up in heaven," said Dolly gravely. "I wonder if it's seen God."

"Stars can't *see*, you stupid!" returned Charlie. A pause and a silence, save for the ripple of long grass and the bowing of the daisies' heads as Margaret's dress passed over them.

Then—"Does God forget, Aunt Marg'ret?"

"No, darling, of course not."

"Then why do we say, 'Remember not our sins?'"

And after some explanation, such as it was, and with a sigh, little Dolly looked up. "I wish I was a sin, Aunt Marg'ret!"

Margaret began to wonder what her theological teaching could have been.

"Why, Dolly?" she asked anxiously.

"Because then God would take me away."

Margaret breathed again. But she could not answer.

CHAPTER XX.

“And though so easily learnt, and brief
Is the form our new faith’s put in,
When we’ve said, ‘I believe in a Round of Beef,
And live by a Leg of Mutton,’
We come to another region of facts,
That are met quite as well by the Gospel and *Acts*.
As by any teaching that’s newer.”

DORA GREENWELL.

Two days later, and Margaret’s dress was again buoyed up by the rippling grass and daisies; but not the grass and daisies of Fernhill. She was in a strange place, amongst strangers, and going to a strange church across the fields.

She had purposely hung behind the rest of the party, and it was a large one; and not till she saw the last parasol disappear from the avenue had she set forth. No one had asked her to walk with them, nor had any one missed her. But it was from no aggrieved or morbid feeling that she chose to walk alone. She liked the quiet, and she felt she had nothing in common with the party at Beauchamp Towers.

She was mistaken, however; for with two at least she had much in common, or would have hereafter.

The grass waves gave ominous warning of approaching footsteps. Margaret looked round.

“Walking alone, Miss Marshall?” said Mr. Leslie, to whom she had merely bowed across a large table. “How is that?”

He had a pleasant open expression, that atoned for much that was faulty in Margaret’s eyes; such as an exceeding white and pinkness, a per-

fectly girlish smoothness of face, and a sunny head of hair, too "pretty," she thought, to be manly, according to her ideas. Gaspar's large brow and ruddy beard always started up before her, and "all men else were shadows."

Mr. Leslie had other faults: such as wearing suits of mauve serge, with magenta stockings; and pea-green Norfolk coats, with canary stockings. Knickerbockers, of course (for Mr. Leslie was very well made), except on Sundays; and now he came out resplendent in long black coat, white waistcoat, pale blue tie, and a moss-rose in his button-hole. It was thanks to his good pleasant face, and his easy gay manner, and the sunny hair that Margaret disliked, that Mr. Leslie bore his striking variety of attire as he did. Most men would have been utterly vulgar in his clothes: as it was, he carried them off marvellously, cared not at all for the jokes made at his expense, or enjoyed them a good deal more than the rest of the party. He had a certain amount of good looks of his own, and he thought he had a right to treat them as he pleased. Besides, he had fifteen thousand a-year; and what may not fifteen thousand a-year do, or leave undone?

How he came into it? From his father, certainly? But how his father came into it is a different thing. The son was not ashamed of it, why should he be so?

"My father was a son of the soil," said he to Margaret. "He made all his money in mills. It is a very good thing for me and my sisters he did; for I should never have done it. You

are not aristocratic, I suppose, Miss Marshall? I hope not."

"Oh no," said Margaret, laughing.

"But you are not good family, are you? You aren't one of the Yorkshire Marshalls?"

"The same family," said Margaret. "My father was the younger brother of the then Mr. Marshall of Levington; but I never saw him, and I have never seen my cousin. I do not know anything about them."

"How is that—eh?"

"We have such different spheres," said Margaret. "I live in London to work. They come there to go out and to be gay. We have nothing in common. My brother——" she begun; but she hesitated and stopped.

He had too much good feeling to notice it, and went on talking.

"I was very sorry for you—that I was—when you first came. It must be beastly for a poor girl arriving by herself among such a lot of strangers. But you don't seem to care—you look so very proud and quiet."

Margaret opened her eyes. "*Proud?*" she said; and then she laughed softly at the notion.

"You know what I mean: not *proud*, exactly, but dignified, somehow. It goes a long way, that, and prevents people sitting on you."

"Miss Beauchamp has been very kind," said Margaret.

"Has she? it's not her line: but I suppose she can be, when she likes. What do you think of mine hostess?"

"She is very like her daughter, only I have seen less of her."

"Like her daughter? Oh dear no, not the least. I hate Madam Beauchamp, to tell you the truth. You should hear her inviting her guests—no, writing her lists of guests out: it is a *fine* thing. 'Philip, darling,' she says, 'we must have a little party.' That's the first cram—she asks fifty-two at a time, if she can get them all of one sort."

"Of one sort?" inquired Margaret.

"Yes. The shabby lot is here now. No, don't look at me, Miss Marshall: I'm a tame cat, and come when I like; and I think I come oftener than I should: I come with any set. With the *comme-il-faut* lot, I go down as very passable because of my fortune. Well, but I was telling you about the party, you know. 'Philippine, love, bring a pencil' (that's Miss Beauchamp, you know); 'who shall we have for Thursday three weeks? Remember we shall have Lord and Lady Tomnoddy here at that time.' Philippine—Miss Beauchamp, I mean—suggests a Johnson or a Black. She knows they won't go down, but they came into her head first, and she likes them probably as well as any de-anythings. She's not at all stuck-up or aristocratic, like the mother. You don't know Miss Beauchamp yet. She is quite different from what you think, and as clever as—you are, perhaps. Not that she is ever over-polite to me, Miss Marshall, and I don't see much chance that she ever will be." And poor Mr. Leslie's face lost its beaming smile for a moment, as he pulled an ox-eye daisy into pieces and threw it away.

The story of Mrs. Beauchamp's invitation list was cut short just as Mr. Leslie related with much gusto that Miss Beauchamp had once suggested to her mother that the business would be best settled by asking people alphabetically. "Only the day all the S.'s come, I shall have a sick headache, mamma, and not come down."

They had now reached the church, and Margaret had no further conversation with Mr. Leslie for some time; for on their return homewards he escorted Miss Beauchamp, and she found herself walking by a most amiable old-maid relation of the family, who, being without settled home, vocation, will, property, or gifts of any sort (barring the angelic temper), was at the beck and call of any one, kin or no kin; and, moreover, was under unceasing and overpowering obligation to them, as she thought, for favours tossed at her sideways, and gratefully gathered up. She wore a faded purple merino, which took up as little room as possible in the world. In fact, she always presented the appearance of being in a state of chronic apology for her existence. (Which I am afraid has been said by some one before.)

She rattled on to Margaret in a weak, garrulous strain, that would have been fatiguing, but for the extreme simplicity and childlike enjoyment of life that shone through every sentence.

"So very magnificent a park! O yes, indeed. And the ferns—did you ever see such ferns? Oh I *am* so fond of ferns! And the house, Miss Marshall—what a vast residence, is it not? And what a large party, is it not? Oh I was so very

glad to see you when you came. I am *very* fond of young *ladies*, you know;" and Miss Middlemay slipped her hand confidentially into Margaret's arm, and rambled on for ten minutes in the same strain, without pause or variety, save for the way in which she skipped from subject to subject, and found fresh beauties and pleasures in each.

Here Miss Beauchamp and her escort joined them.

"You have been doing the charitable all day, Miss Marshall," said Philippine, "both going to church, and coming back."

Poor Mr. Leslie, who overheard the remark, winced visibly. Miss Middlemay was singing a tuneless ditty to herself among the roses, so she escaped her share of discomfort.

"Don't look shocked, Miss Marshall," continued Philippine. "Mr. Leslie is quite harmless.

'All these serpents kept by charmers
Leave the natural sting behind,'

you know. Have you spoken to Mr. Cargrave? *He* is clever, if you like. He has opinions of his own—bad ones, I dare say, but still opinions; and that is a relief. One gets so tired of perpetual concord and everlasting affirmatives." And she cast a side glance of contempt at Mr. Leslie.

"I am not allowed any opinions of my own, Miss Marshall; they are all nipped in the bud. What should you do in my case?" said Mr. Leslie, laughing feebly.

"Take the opposite course, undoubtedly."

"Yes; go home instead of coming here," broke in Philippine. "I should like to talk to

Miss Marshall now. I think I have given you my mind for to-day. Now, if I were you, I should rifle Miss Middlemay for some fresh ideas." And she turned round and took Margaret away.

"I dare say you think me very rude," said she, "but really I am bored out of all patience; and we have known each other since we were children. He always called me 'Phil' till the other day, but I made him give it up."

"It must have been difficult," said Margaret.

"Oh dear no! I told him people said I was engaged to him, and that I should be much obliged to him to put an end to so preposterous an idea."

"And how did he take it?"

"As he always does. He thinks everything I say is clever. When one knows one's-self a fool, it is aggravating, you know. Mr. Cargrave now contradicts me as rudely as I contradict Jack Leslie. It is so refreshing. I don't like the man, he is so presumptuous; but I don't feel that I can bruise him under my heel, as he bruises Genesis, or as I bruise Jack. So I have a sort of respect for him that is, after all, no respect. I do not pretend to be a pious woman, but Mr. Cargrave, I must own, makes one's hair stand on end."

Two days afterwards Margaret found herself deep in an argument—a dinner-table argument too—with this man.

She had not sought it, for she had no opinion of her own powers, and the discussion was a most painful one to her. Happily for her, such sentiments were not wholly novel. Gaspar's friends

or acquaintances had sometimes conversed before her in like manner, and the paralysing horror at the first knowledge that such things were abroad in the world had passed away—not the horror, but the paralysis. And when Mr. Cargrave challenged her indirectly with some profane remark, she was up in arms immediately.

Any one who has any knowledge of the human countenance, or its diverse expressions, must know the peculiar cast of an atheist's face—the brow devoid of all grandeur, the fixed and soulless expression of the eye, the look of stern calculation, the intense materialism of his creed, or no creed, pervading all.

Mr. Cargrave had such a face: limp sandy hair and keen blue-grey eyes, the brows slightly contracted and lowered over them. But the self-satisfaction, amounting almost to insolence, which he took no trouble to conceal, but rather gloried in, enlisted all Margaret's sympathies against him.

"You feel, then, no consciousness of a second and higher life—a life that has nothing to do with organisms and species, or very indirectly? You feel no necessity for a spiritual life?"

"Certainly not. Why should we exhaust ourselves in misty and obscure imaginations? What do they lead to, but to mistiness and obscurity?"

"That depends upon who leads and who is led," said Margaret.

"It is all barren. And why turn to things we know nothing of, when we can have glorious materials for endless knowledge within our grasp?"

"That is the snare, I fancy," said Margaret; "at least, for men of great intellectual capacity

and scientific research. Grasping much, they think they can grasp all, and that what lies beyond their reach must of necessity be non-existent. It does not occur to you, I suppose, that it is possible to become too materialistic, as well as for us to become too superstitious?"

"Man's reason is his highest gift——"

"Who is the giver?" broke in Margaret.

"And to employ that," he continued, not heeding her remark, "is his highest duty."

"I cannot see who *you* owe any duty to, Mr. Cargrave."

"To humanity, Miss Marshall."

"And you can conceive nothing greater than man? You must have a nobler acquaintanceship than most of us if you are so content." She could not help thinking, as she looked at his face, that he was hardly capable of a single aspiration.

"Nothing but Nature. To her law we all bow. She is supreme. We see her, we can inquire into her; our reason convinces us that what we see *is* so and so. What does Bibliolatry convince us of? What does it lead us to?"

"Beyond Nature, I hope, to God. That is, if we will suffer ourselves to be led. Have you ever seen a person die, Mr Cargrave?"

"That seems to me a matter of no moment—at least, irrelevant to our subject. Life, as you know, or might know, is a certain disposition of material molecules."

"That is Huxley," said some one across the table, who had been listening with some interest

to the discussion, and inwardly backing up Margaret.

Mr. Cargrave bowed. "I cannot be on safer ground, or quote from better sources. Mr. Huxley may have used the words as I gave them, or not."

"He did," across the table; but the interruption was not heeded.

"We have no right to suppose, until it is proved, that anything is without its natural cause. Of life itself—as I informed you a minute ago—the materials are now known and determined. Carbonic acid, ammonia, and water——"

"I have read that, Mr. Cargrave; but I should like to ask you something. How is it that, holding, as you do, that every effect has its cause, and that nothing need be accounted for by superhuman agency—how is it that some of you believe in what you call 'spontaneous generation,' and hold that we arise from a germ or germs in the waters of the globe? Surely what is spontaneous is without a cause, unless you allow that the cause is superhuman and beyond your knowledge, and therefore God."

"Knowledge is increasing every day. It has not grown to full stature. What is beyond my reach will not of necessity be beyond the reach of the third and fourth generation after me. I maintain, together with many thoughtful men, the opinion that nothing is unaccountable for by purely natural causes. Do I make myself plain enough? I deny that anything is without a cause."

"And yet you deny the First Cause," said Margaret quietly. "There is a limit to your theory,

then, and a contradiction in it. For you come to a place where cause you cannot find, and where that place is, is God."

There was a general movement at the table. Margaret was surprised to find that when she stooped to pick up her handkerchief her hand trembled so that she could hardly hold it.

"How pretty that creature looks to-night!" said a lady to Mrs. Beauchamp.

"She seems to have a great deal to say," returned the hostess drily, pulling on her lace shawl with a jerk.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Dark-browed sophist, come not anear;
All the place is holy ground;

The flowers would faint at your cruel cheer."
TENNYSON.

Margaret overheard the remark and the rejoinder, and the flush of excitement on her face died away. She slipped silently into the conservatory opening from the drawing-room.

It was all aglow with flowery glories. Passion-flowers hung their lovely arms about the place, their blossoms closing one by one upon the beauties that had all day been displayed unseen. Heliotropes, rosy geraniums, jessamine, all the sweeter for their "old familiar faces," had been trained up the wall and over the glass, and the rarest creepers of other countries fraternised with them in wild luxuriance.

"Phil" Beauchamp joined Margaret immediately. She had heard her mother's cutting speech, and

hastened to smooth away its bitterness to the poor stranger girl, who interested her not a little. And yet she, too, was cruel to Mr. Leslie. What strange anomalies we human beings present—we women, I think, especially!

She took Margaret's arm, and sat down on the bench beside her.

"I am so glad I managed that you two should sit together at dinner. Perhaps you may do the poor man good. But he is so arrogant and self-satisfied. How could you keep your temper? I never could. But then I could never have attempted fairly to argue with him."

"Perhaps he deserves some praise for keeping *his*," she answered. "I, of course, am ignorant on all the matters he is so well up in. I know very little about molecules and organisms, and no doubt he thought me very presumptuous. But when he attacks our faith, our God—all that makes life bearable—oh—!——" And Margaret stopped short, all words failing her.

"He is not fit to know of anything that is not earthly and scientific," said Philippine. "Don't laugh, they are synonymous terms to me. Is there anything, do you think, he would not materialise, and grind down into a system? We won't have him in here, or he will bring his calculations to bear on all the roses and the passion-flowers, and then they will never look beautiful nor smell again. We should have a lecture on protoplasm—isn't that the word? And when he talks like that, I feel inclined to say, 'Kill me, and put me out of my pain!' like Victor Galbraith. What have we to live for, if it is all as he says?"

Mr. Leslie had joined them, and had taken his place timidly on the edge of a cane chair. But Miss Beauchamp took no notice of him. She was a grand girl, with a tall, symmetrical figure, and such eyes! Margaret had not thought her so beautiful before; but now, as she stood holding a long trail of passion-flower in her delicate fingers, and looking into the closing buds with an expression of wonder and delight that was almost holy, she made a picture indeed.

Mr. Leslie's eyes were fixed on her.

"I find it quite easy to believe in heaven," said he, *sotto voce*, casting his eyes down, and moving his foot nervously on the stone.

"Don't creak on your chair, please, Mr. Leslie," said Phil, without looking at him. "The calm in this place was so delicious."

"After Mr. Cargrave," put in Margaret, smiling, and full of compassion for poor Jack.

"And before Mr. Leslie," said Phil, carrying a little water-pan to a tap in the corner with an air of provoking independence.

"Let me fill it," he said, springing up from his seat and holding out his ringed hand.

She held the pan firmly in her own. She knew he did not dare touch *that*.

"You do want dampening," she said, looking majestically over her shoulder at him; "but I will do it for you, when it is required." And then she stooped and filled the pan, while he went meekly to his seat again.

"Will you stand for your picture to me to-morrow, Miss Beauchamp?" said Margaret.

"Oh, yes, if you like it. But won't you have Mr. Leslie? He has got nothing to do. *What?* not in his canary stockings with the pea-green coat? I wonder at your taste, Margaret. May I call you Margaret? Of course I am 'Phil' to every one—the present company on that creaking chair always excepted. And on gala-days I am Philippine to mamma. So you will not immortalise the canary stockings? Oh, how I wish Mr. Cargrave would find there is no cause extant for such an effect as canary stockings, and then, perhaps, the effect would shrivel up! Here you are, Mr. Cargrave; is there any protoplasm in canary stockings? And, if so, will you please extract it at once? But please don't come into the conservatory. All the protoplasm here is mine, and not to be interfered with. You had much better take Mr. Leslie, and experiment on him; he has got nothing to do. I wonder if you will find anything in him; *I* can't."

The next day, after breakfast, Margaret gave her pupil her second lesson. She had very little talent, and the task would have been hopeless but for her extreme good humour and her pleasant, half-childish, half queen-like ways, that both amused and delighted Margaret. It was something very new to her to see a life so full of sunshine, and she watched it with the interest of a phenomenon.

Philippine soon discovered this.

"You have had a great deal of trouble, I can see that. And beginning to teach seems a good opening for fresh annoyances."

"I am happier than I have been for some time past," Margaret answered, "because my mind is

at rest about—those I care for, and I see my way to helping myself at last—and them.” And she blushed involuntarily.

Phil gave an uneasy sigh, and was silent.

“What agreement did you make with mamma?” she asked at last abruptly.

“None.”

“None at all? is it possible? Did that artist, Mr. Pickering not put you up to that?”

“He would not think of it,” said she, “and, I must say, I never thought of it either, at least, of making any definite arrangement. I must leave it to Mrs. Beauchamp.”

Mrs. Beauchamp and Mrs. Penrhyn came in at that moment, Miss Middlemay following in the rear.

“I hope you are earnest, my dear, over your work,” said the mother. “Remember that such opportunities must not be thrown away. Have you any card of terms, Miss Marshall, by you?”

Margaret coloured again, and said, “None.”

Mrs. Beauchamp wore an eyeglass, and so did Mrs. Penrhyn. They both brought them into play at once. Phil had taken the precaution of throwing her unsuccessful daub to the other end of the room at the sound of approaching voices, but Margaret’s stood on a chair before her.

There was a long silence. She did not work, for she could not, with those criticising eyes upon her. Mrs. Penrhyn was waiting to hear what Mrs. Beauchamp would say; so was Miss Middlemay. Mrs. Beauchamp, being no judge, gave her opinion very positively.

“You have got that arm too long by far.”

Margaret ventured to differ, and to prove that the arm was exactly as it should be.

"Measurement or no measurement, no one will persuade me that is in proportion. Don't you agree with me, Mrs. Penrhyn?"

"It certainly appears so," responded that lady.

"—appears so," echoed Miss Middlemay from the background.

"I think it is a great pity you have so little colouring in your picture," continued Mrs. Beauchamp; "who ever saw a girl with those brown shades on her neck?"

"I quite agree with you," said Mrs. Penrhyn, nodding her head sagely.

No echo from the background this time. Miss Middlemay saw that Margaret was being assailed, and that she was fighting single-handed, or rather bearing it all patiently. And after this she could not be induced to corroborate Mrs. Beauchamp's statement. This was the less difficult, because her opinion was never asked for.

We must be prepared to find in all our avocations, whatsoever they may be, that even the measure of real merit which does exist and transpire, will not by the ignorant among our friends and critics be recognised and acknowledged. Superiority can afford to stoop, and to single out such beauties as are to be found. A botanist by a muddy roadside will see the one rare or interesting plant that lifts its tiny head, when common passers-by would only see the mud. The very difficulties, too, that genius must surmount to reach its pinnacle make the man of genius (of whatever degree) merciful to the short-comings of others, and

appreciative of whatsoever of good and great they have attained to.

And, again, nothing is so easy as to depreciate. To find fault, it might seem, at first sight, would necessitate that the fault-finder be on a certain moral elevation; but there is no doubt that to appreciate demands a higher still. And have we not fallen to the lowest stage of degradation when, unable to conceive or to create beauty, intellectual, artificial, or moral, we are also incapable of admiring the creation or the conception of others?

Poor Margaret, she suffered what all aspirants must suffer. The first time the heart aches, ay, and the second time too. Perhaps the third time the heart takes courage, and rebels, and cries, "What care I?" and the fourth time it is part sorrowful, part doubtful, part thankful. The first fury is past; the self-satisfaction, too, is past. There remains a little wholesome indecision, a certain wondering over the criticism given, a deal of doubtfulness of self, a little courage at the thought that all men, great or small, that *would* be great must pass through the ordeal. A compound that makes surely that state of unrest which is the lot and inheritance of humanity.

And this very unrest—is it not proof of itself of a hereafter? We strive for the mountain-top, and attain, as we think, our goal. We find it is no summit after all. But does that make us question whether there be a summit and an end at all? Surely not, however often the disappointment is repeated.

So it is in this life to most men; Mr. Cargrave

naturally excepted, and his school. We at least believe in One whose word shall not return unto him void—having made man and man's work, is not willing that one jot or tittle should be labour in vain. The insufficiency now, is a Balaam's ass taking to itself language to tell of the Then that is to be. Everything is desired of us; everything is commenced by us; and completion crowns nothing. Something more!—perfection, perfection!—somewhere in the time to come.

Mr. Cargrave would tell us we are teleologists and enthusiasts. We answer that our aspirations are as natural as our instincts—that to us a wider and higher life (without which our higher man cannot exist any more than our bodies without food; or, as he would put it, without carbonic acid, ammonia, and water) is as apparent as this daily commonplaceness which surrounds us. With some, indeed, this lower existence is but a passing dream—the body is but a servant of the mind; and that mind lives elsewhere, in a reality of its own.

I have said “this commonplaceness.” For is it not all commonplace, robbed of all that lends it majesty and beauty here? Life without hope; death without hope—which is hardest; which most awful?

“Kill me and put me out of my pain!” said Phil Beauchamp hastily; but had she paused a moment she might have shrunk, I think, from parting with the only happiness she was ever to know—from laying aside the beautiful face she wore, and the pure, glad heart, even the paltry pleasure of teasing Jack Leslie—for a yawning grave, and corruption, and silence everlasting.

Ceasing to be. If we could believe it, if our whole inner man did not rise against the notion with the force that only the inner man can have, we were of all creatures most miserable. To come to the knowledge of something infinitely high, and grand, and vast, and pure, and to be told it never can be ours. It is strange that that nature that Mr. Cargrave worships—that we too worship under another name should for once so bitterly deceive us.

Margaret was thinking somewhat in this strain on the evening following her argument, when she was disturbed by the rustle of Mrs. Beauchamp's dress, which fold after fold was composing itself in a chair beside her. Mrs. Beauchamp gave it an admonitory pat, and then a smooth of approval. Lastly, she shook out her lace sleeves, and tried to disentangle one from the clasp of her bracelet.

She began talking to Margaret in a manner so changed and affable that she seemed to be a totally different person. Margaret had heard Mrs. Penrhyn say that Mrs. Beauchamp was a most charming woman. Now she began to think so too.

"I am so surprised to hear you are a near relative of my very dear and old friend, Lady Margaret Marshall. Mr. Leslie has been telling me she is your cousin," she said, after some conversation.

"She married my cousin," said Margaret. "I do not know her at all; I have never seen her."

"We hope to go to Levington next month," continued Mrs. Beauchamp, taking a cup of coffee

from the tray held before her; "and then I mean certainly to bring you to her remembrance."

It was lucky that Mrs. Penrhyn came up at that moment, and seating herself on the ottoman beside Margaret, interrupted, or rather broke in upon the subject, and led it out into another channel. The wilful colour had mounted into Margaret's face, and she had drawn herself up threateningly.

"I think I am not mistaken in supposing you are first cousin to Marshall of Levington, Miss Marshall?" And Mr. Penrhyn next smiled blandly, and raised his somewhat nervous eyebrows into interrogative shapes.

The same form of question and answer was gone through again. It was wonderful what a difference this "connection" made in the eyes of the small world at Beauchamp Towers.

Margaret became quite a subject of interest and conversation. Every one knew Levington, and the Marshalls thereof, either personally or by hearsay. By the end of the evening the news had percolated through the entire assembly; and even Miss Middlemay had conveyed her veiled congratulations to Margaret. The "pale spectrum of the salt" was rapidly fading away.

Next day, when Philippine Beauchamp ran upstairs with a paper in her hand, and told Margaret that a gentleman was calling there, who spoke of a Gaspar Marshall as his friend, she was greatly surprised to find that Margaret did not seem more anxious to meet him.

"*What*, Margaret?" she said, "not go down and see the man who may have seen your brother

later than you?" For Margaret, with tears in her eyes, had little by little discovered to Philippine the secret of her affection for her brother; each time retracting half she had said, as if it were too sacred for strangers' ears, and each time forgetting herself again in praise of the beloved one, and under the seductive charm of the girl's manner.

"You have not said anything about me? About my being here—about my—" and Margaret left her sentence unfinished, and looked appealingly into Philippine's face.

"No, nothing. I came up as soon as I had heard him mention the Something Review for some month, 'in which,' he said, 'my friend Gaspar Marshall wrote a first-rate paper.'"

"I *cannot* go," said Margaret nervously; "don't ask me, please." And she squeezed twice too much light red on to her palette by mistake.

"Do you know who he is, Margaret?" asked Phil kindly.

"No, not at all. But I would rather not go down. Please do not mention me at all, Philippine."

Philippine was quite bewildered. What could Margaret mean? It almost seemed as if she were ashamed of the position in which she found herself at Beauchamp Towers. Could Margaret know such miserable shame? Philippine looked in her face, and said "No."

"Well, keep the paper; I will not tease you. Papa sent it up with a paragraph marked. They all said, 'Well done!' when they had read it. Papa was quite proud of having you in the house."

And so Philippine went away.

And Margaret read: and her heart beat fast. And she covered her face with her hands and thanked God once again.

"I think that fellow Pickering pays some one to write you up, Miss Marshall," said Mr. Beauchamp at lunch time, smiling.

"Indeed, I think he must," said Margaret, innocently.

"Have you tried Phil?" he asked.

"Yes; I am doing a sketch now."

"Well," said he, lowering his voice to a whisper, "I give you an order for one, remember." And he tapped the table significantly. "No hurry, you know; whenever you like to send it me: that will just suit me. I want one of Phil in my study. O yes! I shall be much indebted to you if you will do me this little favour"—and "Whose plate is this?" to the butler—Mr. Beauchamp went on carving the cold chicken.

After luncheon the ladies had a way of grouping round the drawing-room window, where they discussed plans for the afternoon; while the gentlemen sauntered among the flower-beds and smoked.

"Who is that, Philippine," said her mother, raising her eye-glass, "between us and the second elm?"

Phil raised her glass, too, to her wicked eye.

"It is either Mr. Leslie or a dahlia," said she.

But I am afraid it was neither Mr. Leslie nor a dahlia.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds."—
IN MEMORIAM.

A train is rolling slowly along through green fields, now powdered with July dust.

Wayside crucifixes, ghastly enough when they are approached, are placed at intervals along the line, or rather in the fields below it. A short, sturdy woman, with full dark petticoats, and a jacket bedecked with much silver and many coins, passes, or is passed now and then. Sometimes she kneels for a moment under the shadow of the outstretched figure with the upturned face of agony, painted, alas! but too vividly by the poor artist of some neighbouring village. Too vividly for our peace, who are conscious for an instant that life is going too easily with us who are followers (so-called) of Him; too vividly for those who have turned aside from the old ways for

"The Titan child's decree,
The baby Science, born but yesterday."

and who, as the upturned face is for a moment brought before them, start inwardly as the words of a mother's hymn come to their minds, and the soul whispers, "What if the old way were the true way, after all?"

I would not harp to weariness on the theme that has already tinged two chapters. They have much to answer for who weary humanity out of all interest in great and high things by their unskilful and injudicious handling. And how re-

petition deadens the keen edge of interest, and how habit and familiarity make the greatest of mysteries appear to us as commonplace, is well known to us all.

But an age has come when thinking men and women cannot be satisfied with nominalities. Luke-warmness has had its reign; now zeal for good or evil is abroad in all the earth. Traditions, however ancient and venerable, say the materialists of to-day, shall not stand before the touchstone of Truth.

The answer of Gamaliel were not amiss here. If the tradition be not of God, verily it shall not stand. If it be of God, it stands, and shall, to everlasting.

People are thinking now as they have never thought before; and people are more honest than they have ever been before. Man's mind is working with a vigour and a sincerity of purpose that seems to be wholly new. The world has had its play-time, and when it was frivolous and ignorant it accepted the highest and holiest truths, not altogether from piety, not altogether from faith, but because it was easier to accept than to refuse. Yes, and sometimes because there existed no degrees of ease and difficulty for it. It is easy for those who have never thought for themselves to swallow what is offered them by others.

This is too often mistaken for faith. Is it faith in the eyes of God? I think not. Faith cries, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see!" as David cried; not, "Blind me, that I may accept all Thou givest, or that is given in Thy name."

Does it displease Him, think you, that the man to whom He has given vast gifts of reasoning and intellect, should use these for *all* other services than for the contemplation of Him? When Reason has reached her limit, the soul that is greatest cries out indeed, "There is yet more beyond!" How should the finite comprehend infinity? Is the servant above his lord?"

God says to man, as to the waves of the sea, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." And what shall follow here if not that holy thing called faith? And what is faith but the boundary line where man, losing himself, would fain lose himself in God? And what is poorer, meaner, more narrow, and dogmatic, than that teaching which says, "Because I see no more, no more exists?"

The same maxims fell heavily upon the heart of one Christopher Columbus, who dared to believe in something he could not see; and who, believing, and likewise searching, found that in which he had believed, after all.

Honesty is good; but the abuse of honesty comes round again to self-deception. Faith is good; but faith itself may be degraded into a superstition. There is a prayer which beseeches of our Father to give us a "right judgment in all things." We need that blessing very often.

In the train that is rolling into Munich, and in one carriage, there is a faith that has been degraded into an obstinate superstition, and there is a follower of honesty who is verging upon self-deceit. And perhaps there is one who, as nearly as may be, takes the equal course between

them; as nearly as the delicate balance of the human judgment will allow of.

Besides these, there is a Frenchman, who is rattling out profane jokes, and talking with impudent familiarity of the "bon Dieu" whom he does not know, and of the "ciel," in which he does not believe. And there is an American, with opinions like his clothes, very loose and badly put together.

The conversation had begun between the American and a young Englishman. Each had given his opinion freely about some question of the day, more or less directly connected with the question of religion. The American, with a bravado that was offensive and vulgar, had given his views unasked; the Englishman had stated his own without ostentation, even with some unwillingness, because he felt himself challenged by an English lady, who called him to her assistance in "sitting upon" the American.

"I must tell you," said he, in answer to her garrulosity and vehement appeal, "that I share some of this gentleman's opinions, and that you are mistaken in supposing I can take up the cudgels against him."

And then he had looked down at the *Times* on his lap with a heightened colour.

There was something in his voice, and the honesty of his words and manner, that impressed one with the idea that he was at least as truthful as the daylight. He had doubts; he would not therefore that a stranger should suppose him, even for one moment, to be better or other than he knew himself to be.

The English lady turned upon him with all the weapons of her mistaken and ignorant zeal. Mistaken in its form I mean; for so narrow, unchristian, and almost revolting, did Christianity appear through the medium of her eloquence, that she proved herself but an ill advocate of her cause.

Mere abuse, ill-temper, contradiction, and bold assumptions, will help no cause that is worth helping. The very decision with which this unworthy champion spoke was her worst enemy. People of liberal opinions, and with minds that they would fain think unprejudiced, turn with disgust from all that is narrow, and obstinate, and decided. The men that would have listened to Margaret's well-weighed words and patient manner, treated this woman as a fanatic. God made religion grand and pure and catholic, but men have sought out many inventions to bring it down and to degrade it.

No wonder we come to think with the poet—

“There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds;”

creeds believed in too often only because they are not thought about at all. A man's worst enemies are his ill-judged friends; too often the most prominent of God's servitors are his virtual foes.

Margaret did speak at last—for Margaret is here, how, you will hear presently. And when she spoke, the manner of both the combatants changed at once. The lady who had been so valiant having delivered herself of all her logic

and no-logic, was now maintaining an indignant silence in the corner.

The American, who cared little one way or another, soon retired from the conflict, and betook himself to sleep. And Margaret and the Englishman, who sat side by side, had the rest of the conversation to themselves.

They were sad enough, both of them. She with the sorrow of suspense upon her, and he with that weary burden—a troubled mind. *He* at least had no unreasonable decision. To Margaret he spoke with the diffidence of one addressing his superior. He had one worship left, that of purity and holiness, only as yet he could not accept the beaten track.

"Sometimes," said he, "I can see it all as you do, and then thoughts come, and science seems to go so against it all, and then it is as dim as ever."

He spoke with such hatred of all that is low and evil, with such reverence and respect for all that is good and true, that even Margaret marvelled, and questioned within herself whether her standard were as high.

"He *cannot* go wrong," she said to herself: "following purity as he does, there is only one place where he can end; that is, where he finds purity and holiness incarnate."

They stopped for a long time at some small station, and no one got in or left the train.

"They're calling at the houses round about to see if any one's coming, I guess," observed the American drily, curling himself up to sleep again.

"This is the last station before Munich," said

the young Englishman to Margaret. "Do you get out there?"

"Yes," she said. Her eyes were very bright—that had been so sleepless since England had seen them—but her face was so drawn and thin that it would have attracted the attention of the most unobservant.

Her fellow-traveller was very much concerned.

"You will have some sherry, will you not?" and he held the cup of his flask to her, while his kind open face looked anxiously into hers. He had a different face to Mr. Cargrave's; and yet the impetuous lady opposite would have made and seen no distinction between the two.

But Margaret could not taste it, though her lips were parched and dry. The anguish that for a short time had been suspended or controlled while she talked eagerly and earnestly to her neighbour, had returned with redoubled force. He saw it, and with intuitive good feeling was silent. No one could have been otherwise than respectful to Margaret: this man would never have been otherwise if he could.

As they neared Munich, Margaret came back to herself for a moment, and remembered his kind thought of and care for her. She remembered too his troubles, and she felt sure she should not easily forget the look of sadness on that open, almost sweet face.

Most women would have been ashamed to say to a stranger what Margaret said. For most, perhaps, it might be ill-judged or impertinent, or unnatural. To Margaret, with all her reserve, it was perfectly natural.

"You will be happier some day soon. I will pray for you."

The tears welled into his eyes, that were almost childish in their plaintive, searching expression. After a long pause he said:

"If I had lived with good women I do not think I should be as I am now."

"Have you no home, no sisters?" said Margaret. (I fear most girls would have said, "O no!" and disavowed the power that good women have.)

"Not a home that does me any good. It has done me harm. That and college together have set me wrong. They are too good for me; I cannot talk to them and ask about my doubts and my fears. They have not heard there are any such things in the world. I never saw a woman as patient as you are with a fellow who does not think just as she does: not because he will not, but because he *cannot* do it honestly, somehow. God knows I would if I could." And he put his hands over his face and turned away from Margaret.

"If my mother had lived," said he, "it would have been different. As it is, I never go home now; and they don't care at all. They have given me over to all evil for ever. But I am talking to you and tiring you, and you look so ill. Here is Munich: I will get your luggage out; please sit down on that bench; the waiting-rooms are generally too dirty to go into."

He got the luggage and called a droschke.

"Your address?" he asked. "Where shall he drive to?"

"Hôtel Sophienbad," said Margaret. Her face was so ghastly by this time that he forced her to take some of the discarded sherry before he would let the man drive on.

"I shall be here a few days," said he; "if I can be of any use, will you let me know? Here is my card." Then he took off his hat and was gone.

While the droschke rattles through the white dust of Munich, and down the Maximilian Strasse, we must go back a little, to account for Margaret's sudden removal from Beauchamp Towers.

There is a certain yellow envelope, with the ominous "immediate" printed on its forehead, that is never quite a welcome messenger amongst us. Never at least until the contents have yielded themselves to trembling fingers, and sick hearts have bounded to the words of joy and healing.

Every one looked round (on that Tuesday after luncheon) when the door opened, and every eye followed with dread the course of the yellow envelope. They were all women at that moment, remember, and most of them had some one to hope for and to fear for. And swift as lightning thought carried them each to her own, and each went through a little dream of fear, and suspense, and hope, and relief, before the unwelcome missive found its destination.

There was one exception to this variety of feeling—if hope and fear may be called feeling. From the moment that Margaret had seen the swift-footed messenger, who in his haste had crossed the lawn beneath the windows, an overpowering dread had seized her. She did not

once make place for hope: she did not once question from whom and of whom the tidings came. Before the footman had crossed the room she was as certain that some evil had befallen Gaspar as if she had seen it written by a hand of fire upon the wall.

When she had looked out of the window, and the dread had first seized her—it was more than dread, it was a conviction—Margaret had sat down, because she could not stand, a little apart from the others. In that moment every vestige of colour forsook her face, and the hands she had folded closely together gathered round them a cold dew.

Now it lay upon her lap an instant, unopened. Now it was seized almost fiercely between the cold dewy hands, for a stranger's hand had been put forth to touch it. Philippine had placed herself between Margaret and the lookers-on, and she laid her hand on her shoulder. She wished Margaret to know the worst, or to put an end to her vain fears, if such they were, at once; and she hit upon the right expedient when she attempted to open the telegram herself.

“Ludwig Gessler, Hôtel Sophienbad, München,
to Mademoiselle Marshall,
Fernhill, &c., London.

“Your brother is very serious ill here. Pray come now.”

Margaret's courage came back to her with the demand for action. She tried to stand up, but Philippine pushed her gently into her seat again.

“I will get the train-table,” said she, “and then

Margaret.

you shall come with me to your room, and we will see when the next goes."

They sat together for ten minutes, that seemed an hour to both, and Philippine drew her taper fingers over column after column of the hopeless railway-guide. One at 5.15 p.m.—three hours hence—that did not go as far as London. One at 4.15—that stopped at Draybridge; two hours to wait there.

"If you went by that," said Philippine, stroking Margaret's hair soothingly with her soft hand, "you could drive home and see your children; and then join the express at Draybridge again at 6.15. You would be in London by 7.15, and get down to the quay in good time. Boats start for Antwerp on Mondays, Wednesdays, and——"

"This is Tuesday," said Margaret, with a groan.

The table was taken down to Mr. Beauchamp, and Margaret had ten minutes alone. When Phil came back, she was on her knees before her box, packing the few things she would require, and the look of desolate helplessness had been lifted off her face.

"Dear Margaret," said Phil, raising her by the waist as if she had been a little child, "let me do that. You drink that wine I have brought you, and then put on your bonnet. There is a train at 3.50 that you can meet at the station beyond ours, and the carriage is coming round at once. You will have plenty of time. Take some books with you—these are yours, are they not? I will put them in, and some of mine, too, because when he is getting well, you know, he will like being read to. Many people are seriously

ill, Margaret, over and over again, and get through it quite safely. Don't lose heart."

"If I may but see him once!" she whispered, tying her bonnet-strings so tightly that she nearly choked herself. Too ill to write! How could she have much hope that he would recover?

"Once, once!" she kept saying to herself, half in a dream, half in an agony of prayer. Words that came to her lips a hundred times and more, before suspense itself was suspended, as the slow Bavarian train puffed lazily into Munich station.

There lay the quaint white town, with its dark crimson cupolas, baked to a white heat under the July sun. There stood the grand figure of "Bavaria" among the dusty trees. And there stands a colourless Englishwoman, in a foreign land and among strangers.

But friends arise for us from among strangers and in strange places.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Well, if a woman hadn't better be in her grave than be married! That is if she can't be married to a decent man."—

MRS. CAUDLE'S CURTAIN LECTURES.

Mr. and Mrs. Pickering put themselves on board the Southampton and Havre packet one hot day in June.

The green waves were a little rebellious, the hot bright weather notwithstanding. Perhaps

they protested against the unusual weight they were called upon to bear.

Mrs. Pickering poised herself upon the narrow bench and leant heavily upon the bulwarks. She was in full travelling costume, brown holland suit with a loose jacket, a white bonnet with yellow ribbons, and a large blue "ugly." This last appendage protected her complexion from the detrimental effects of brine and wind.

Mrs. Pickering had a very large carpet-bag, and a very small maid. With little luggage she had consented to put up, but without her Abigail move she would not.

"*You* have no feelings, Pickering, for the feelings of a delicate woman arrivin' in foreign parts by herself."

"By yourself, old woman?"

"Yes, Pickering, begging your pardon—you ain't no use in the ways I refer to. Do you remember, Pickering," she continued, in a solemn and impressive voice, "do you remember when we was on that blessed tower through Germany, and you would have me go alone and unprotected—do you remember one event as happened? Oh no, very likely not; it didn't make no odds to you if a furrin' flunkey came a-marching in my room, quite composed and imper'ent, before I was out of my bed. 'Wussi les letters,' said he, puttin' 'em on the table and a-staring at me as if he'd never seen a nightcap before. And 'Wussi le door!' says I, screaming at him till my throat was split."

"He never came again, did he, my woman?" asked Mr. Pickering, who was smoking his pipe

cross-legged. No, I thought not. One look was enough, eh?"

Mrs. Pickering whisked her portly person round with such activity as was possible, and sulked. Sulkiness brought on a worse complaint, and pride had to fall before necessity.

"Pickering, call Pamela," said she.

Mr. Pickering stared.

"Who's Pamela?"

"Jane, Jane! Can't you call her by one name or another? Pamela's a more suitable name surely, Pickering, for foreign parts, than Jane? I *told* you she was to be called Pamela, long ago."

Pamela, *alias* Jane, was called to her mistress, and took up her station beside her. But in the woeful match the servant outstripped her mistress. She was fairly ill before Mrs. Pickering could even lose her colour.

"I do feel that ill, Pickering," said she nevertheless, holding her side, and groaning, and flinging herself half over the bulwarks, "that I could wish—I never was born." And she looked into his face for some loving response; for a word of entreaty that she should not wish anything so fatal to his happiness.

"So could I—almost—my woman, do you know!" he answered coolly. Not being in any way a sufferer himself, the words could admit of but one interpretation to any one but Juliana.

"Walk up and down, Pickering, my dear love," said she coaxingly, "or I'll make you worse."

He was too glad of the opportunity, and strode about with his hands in his pockets, his slouch hat tied down over his ears, and the wind stirring

up even his thick bushy eyebrows. He was a sociable man, with kindly manners, and a deal of rough humour; just the man to make friends after a fashion with idle, wind-blown people on the deck of a steamer.

But there is very little peace for some people in the world, besides the wicked. Juliana's eyes followed her husband restlessly from point to point.

"Pamela," said she at last, startling the poor little maiden, who, really unfit to move, had laid her head upon the bulwarks, "go and tell your master to speak to me a minute. Don't run, Pamela: it don't look dignified nor well."

Poor little Pamela, who, at the age of fifteen, generally moved very quickly, and ran up and down the dingy London stairs, had no thoughts of running to-day. She tottered towards her master and gave the message, and then fell back into her place.

"Come to the fore-part, Pickering!" said his wife. "I wonder at your going down there, as you wasn't a gentleman at all. Who'd think what your per-annual income is, to see you hobnobbing with the low classes down there?"

"You go to sleep, Juliana, my girl, and don't fret about me. You'll never be well till you get a sleep."

That she would not, if it could be avoided. But go to bed she very soon found she must. With misty eyes she looked round for her husband to help her; and, failing to see him, she and Pamela reeled to the cabin together.

There sleep overcame them both, and the green

waves tossed them to and fro in vain. Even the hard old velvet on the sofas was a soft pillow for poor little Pamela, after the sharp edge of the bulwarks she had left above. To the lullaby of creaking portmanteaus, and heavy footsteps overhead, and the seething of the water against the vessel as she cut her way across the channel, and the tramp, tramp of restless and provokingly able people up and down the cabin stairs, mistress and handmaiden not only fell asleep, but dreamed.

Mrs. Pickering had just prevailed upon her restive husband to make over a large picture and two purses of money to a gorgeous foreign dignitary, in exchange for a baronship, which, printed in full form on pink paper, she was holding tightly in happy hands, when the fall of a handbag from its place on to her foot dispelled the fond delusion, and brought her back to fusty cushions, and the smell of distasteful cooking, and the jingling of bottles in a farther corner. A bundle of maps and a crumpled newspaper were on the floor beside her; on the saloon-table a parrot's cage (with a ruffled and dejected inmate) swung its brass ring ceaselessly from side to side. Its proprietress, well enough to be playful, poked her umbrella ever and anon through the bars. Packets of pressed sand wiches littered the seats; Charles Lever and Miss Braddon lay unheeded, or had been eclipsed by the greater attraction of hot brandy-and-water and a recumbent position.

It was all painfully real and material to Mrs. Pickering's eyes, still radiant from the glitter of the coronet of her dreams.

"Dear me! what a delicious dream I was having to be sure! O dear me!" and she yawned, and tried to pull the "ugly" that had been disarranged into its place again.

The next thought was, of course, "I wonder what has become of Pickering?" and it acted like magic, bringing back energy and vivacity into the whole frame.

Mrs. Pickering had on the whole a kind heart; at least she cast a glance at Pamela, and seeing she slept, proceeded to pick herself up and put herself together unassisted.

It was a matter of some little time, and when it was completed, she was aware that her complexion was not quite what it ought to be. Green, I fear, was the prevailing tint; and this green had been ploughed into small and irregular furrows by the merciless cushions. In fact, one side of Mrs. Pickering's face was unbecomingly seamed, and one of the eyes, that had done such havoc at Margate in the days gone by, was swollen and disfigured. But an arrangement of the "ugly" helped to modify this, and anxiety as to her husband's proceedings overruled for the most part other considerations.

After a few unsuccessful attempts the stairs were surmounted, and the sea breezes began to trifle with Mrs. Pickering's locks. The "ugly" bent and bowed, and the hairs streamed wildly across her eyes; but they were impatiently removed, lest by any means the object of her search should escape her. Not on any seat, nor by the helm, nor on the paddle-box, nor by the funnel, wrapped up in his wife's shawl, and talking to

another lady: such things had happened, but not to-day. Not even among the "low" steerage people at the other end, for Mrs. Pickering soiled her genteel skirts so far as to go to the very verge, almost to cross the line of demarcation—and still Pickering was nowhere to be seen.

"You haven't seen a gentleman of quality lately on the deck, my good man?" inquired the anxious Juliana at last of one of the crew; "the gentleman that came on board with me and suite?"

"Dunno' who 'sweet' is, and didn't 'appen to see you come aboard, ma'am; but what sort of a gen'leman is it?"

"A gentleman of position, I tell you, my good man, with a slouch hat fastened down because of the wind, and——"

"Gen'leman of position, is he? O—ay—well. I can't say as to position, ma'am, only he's in a very queer position now, and no mistake. And that's in the steerage cabin a-larking with people who ain't got no position, 'cept the boards as is under their feet. It ain't a fit place for a lady——"

But before he could finish, Mrs. Pickering, with the agility of a chamois, was half-way down the stairs of the steerage cabin. They at least maintained the character she had assigned to that part of the vessel; they were so low and steep that, had not fear and wrath and retaliation armed Mrs. Pickering with a manly courage, she must have given up the attempt in despair.

Such a scene was presented to her when she had reached the door, that even the swollen eye assumed its natural proportions, the better to serve its mistress.

A motley crowd of poorly-clothed people, some looking very hungry, some very noisy, some very ill, occupied the so-called saloon. The sufferers lay upon the ground or benches, the hungry ones sat still, or, if they were children, cried. The noisy members stood round the table, on which a bottle of brandy and some glasses were placed. They were far from being a disreputable set; indeed, most of them were respectable enough in their normal condition. But under the influence of brandy, sea-sickness, and jollity, and in Mrs. Pickering's eyes, they appeared to be the scum of the earth.

To be sure the motley group came in but as a background or foreground to the one central figure, standing up with graceful prominence among them.

Devoid of coat, his hair tossed upon his face, his face itself purple rather than red, Joshua Pickering, member of a hundred Academies, and rejoicing in a "per-annual income" of some thousands, and before the eyes of his delicate and tortured wife, was employed in carrying about the very slouch hat by which she had described him, to each member of the strange fraternity; and into it each member (a pale young woman in black with two children clinging to her, and a baby in her arms, excepted) dropped a contribution.

"Who'll pay the piper? who'll pay the piper?" he kept exclaiming lustily, as he made his rounds. "Come! that's good! that's a brave penny! we'll have a fiver yet between us!" And the willingness with which coppers, and threepenny-pieces,

shillings, even now and then a half-crown, dropped into the hat, bade fair for the fulfilment of the prophecy.

"Another, another!" shouted several of the noisy members, rapping on the table with their fists, or the handles of their knives. "Tip us a stave yet, old fellow!" And loud and deep burst out a song from Mr. Pickering's vast lungs: long enough to please the greediest, and rough enough for the most vulgar, and withal a vein of humour and cordiality, what the French call *bonhomie*, running through it, that made it touch a chord in every heart.

Loud and long as was the song the applause was longer and louder.

Mr. Pickering had not had such a "fling" for a long time: he was beside himself with joy at the so-long-foregone freedom. He tossed his hair back as a horse let loose tosses his mane in the wind; but he had not got his head down yet; there is a hand on the bridle after all.

"Joshua Pickering!"

That was all she said; but poor Joshua very nearly fell to the ground.

His crest-fallen appearance was too ridiculous for the manners of the company. They burst into a loud laugh.

Mr. Pickering carried it off as well as he could; but after all it was but a poor success. He shook hands with one or two of his new friends; he pulled on his coat with a would-be air of indifference; he tried to chaff his wife, but it was very feeble chaff. Finally, he emptied his hat as quickly as

he could into the lap of the young woman with the hungry children.

"There! that'll take you to Paris, poor soul, and keep you there a bit too. Stuff and nonsense! what did I sing for, but to give you the halfpence? Take it, that's a good woman, and don't make a kick-up. Ah, *don't* be a fool!" he added, hastily, almost fiercely, for the poor young woman had stooped suddenly and kissed his hand. Such a great brown, Esau-like hand it was; but to her what should it seem but the hand of an angel? In a moment afterwards she was washing her children's faces, and talking to them cheerily for the first time for many a day. Well she might be cheerful, raised from almost starvation to the competency of ten pounds sterling, not including two francs. The "fiver" may have been collected in the hat, but a second had found its way, I think, from Joshua Pickering's pocket.

I cannot attempt to describe the situation in which this unfortunate gentleman of position found himself, when the friendly faces of his associates in the steerage were shut out from him by the portly figure of his injured wife. Every ribbon on her bonnet, every hair of her head was stiff with horror: every step she took was a reproach, every look an arrow. Such times happily pass over at length; and the distraction of landing at Havre, and being called upon to use a foreign language, made a blessed diversion in Mr. Pickering's favour.

They found themselves very soon in an omnibus, crowded to overflowing and unpleasantly warm, but on their way to the station for Paris.

One of the windows fell down of its own accord close to Mr. Pickering's head. He was thanking it silently for the great favour it had conferred upon him in so marked a manner, when the conductor appeared on the door-step, and challenged him to pay for the broken glass.

Mr. Pickering could be very generous to the deserving, but he had no idea of being swindled out of even a few francs. The argument waxed hot, and Mr. Pickering waxed hotter.

"Je vous dis—je n'ai pas cassé! Je vous dis—do you hear?—je n'ai pas! je n'ai pas! Et je ne will not pay for it—so there!"

And persistent and impudent as was the conductor with his valuable French, Mr. Pickering had the best of it at last. For he held up his good English pine walking-stick a little threateningly in one hand, and his sketch-book in the other, as he stepped out of the omnibus.

"Je suis Official d'Angleterre—et si vous me dites quelque chose de plus—je vous donnerai un good thrashing—so there!"

And the little conductor vanished, while Mrs. Pickering called out loudly, to the admiration of Pamela, whose ignorance was her bliss,—

"Les choses ne sont pas rendu! Comment! vous allez laisser un dame toute par elle-même with the luggage? J'avais entendu vous êtes très cum-il faut dans France! Mercy, mercy—toutes là!—et là!—oui, oui, to the station—pour Paris—wussi Mon-suire—là! Come along, Pamela, he understands perfectly. It's wonderful, to be sure, how a language do come back when it's wanted."

The lithe little porter, with his good manners, thought it wonderful too.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.”—

JOB xix. 21.

“Take care how you lift him! There, my poor fellow. The pillows, Philippine—no, a little more round—there! Are you pretty easy now?”

And the difficult and anxious experiment over, Mr. Beauchamp’s kind face relaxed into its normal serenity.

Gaspar Marshall bowed his head, but hardly answered. What a changed face since we have seen it last! The cheeks fallen in and of a ghastly paleness; the face, whose contour was so full and faultless, now buried in the bush of auburn beard. His head sank helplessly back upon the red pillows behind him, and Margaret and Mr. Beauchamp took their places on the seat opposite.

As the wheels turned round, the sick man opened his eyes. They saw that he was trying to speak, and bent over him to catch the sound.

“Not to-day,” said Margaret softly. She alone had heard the question. His lips moved again.

“Her head aches, Gaspar; she could not come to-day. She will drive with us to-morrow perhaps.”

“Then there was silence. They left the hot

streets, and passed out where the trim houses stand farther apart, with gay gardens round them. They came upon the Café Reib'l, where a gay crowd loitered among the trees, or sat lazily beer-drinking at little tables.

Gungl's band was playing gloriously. Now a swinging melodious German waltz, now a selection from the *Trovatore*, or *Faust*, or the *Nozze di Figaro*.

Mr. Beauchamp signed to the coachman to stop. They stopped there every day. Gaspar listened for a while with closed eyes to the music: it seemed always to soothe him, and a sort of peace would steal over his face as over a sleeping child's.

He never gave the signal to drive on; but when the sun became too hot, or they thought a crowd was about to leave the gardens, Margaret and Mr. Beauchamp would call to the coachman to move on into the quiet country roads. Gaspar could not bear a crowd. One day he tried to struggle into a sitting posture when the sound of many feet passed the carriage, and then an attack of faintness and pain had followed.

It is a pitiful thing to see him so. And a pitiful tale would be the story of his illness from first to last.

He stood one day in such a crowd as now buzzed about the band-stand, as hale a man as ever trod on ground. He had lighted his cigar from that of an Austrian hussar who stood beside him, and they talked together fluently, sometimes in German, sometimes in French.

Suddenly a giddiness came upon him, a black mist stole over his eyes. He knew no more till he found himself conscious in a small room in the Hôtel Sophienbad.

Conscious, but not the same Gaspar he had been before. The strong limbs that had been his stout servitors, and had never known ache or ill, suddenly refused to serve him longer. The clear head was confused and dizzy, the fingers that were used to guide the pen, that at his desire would fly so glibly and so well, lay upon the counterpane powerless and white.

When he could speak, he bade the people of the hotel telegraph to Margaret. And Margaret came.

"I don't understand it," he would say to her with an assumed cheerfulness. "I ought to be about again by this time. Never had a day's illness before, and I don't intend to be an invalid now, especially in this miserable hole. Why did they not take me to my own hotel? There is no one you know in the house, is there?"

"No one, Gaspar."

Then he looked satisfied, and would sleep a little.

And after a few days, peevishness took the place of the assumed cheerfulness, and he would move restlessly to and fro upon his bed. Margaret's unceasing watchfulness and care seemed all in vain.

"You and your doctors don't do me much good, Margaret," he would say. "Just move the pillow, will you?"

And a moment afterwards,—

"Put back the pillow—it is worse than ever. What time is it? Can't you read to me? Look here, you will find my manuscript in that dressing-bag. Read that to me. I want to know how it sounds."

Then she would read, and he would find fault all the while. At last he would say,—

"Put it away; you have no notion of doing justice to a good bit of composition."

And she would beg to be allowed to go on, pleading that the writing was a little indistinct; but in vain.

Once she tried to paint by the half light near the darkened window, thinking he was asleep. But he called her impatiently away. To be distracted from his own thoughts, not to be left alone—these seemed to be his ruling desires.

Sometimes he was like a little child craving to be told stories, to while away the hours.

The day that Margaret came he had discovered for the first time that she had been absent from home, and upon what business. For her letters had naturally missed him, as he moved restlessly from place to place.

He accused her of having hidden her plans from him, of neglecting the children, worst and bitterest taunt of all, of being greedy of gains and regardless of his wishes. Margaret with trembling mentioned the name of Beauchamp Towers.

Gaspar Marshall was not a passionate man, but his eyes gathered to themselves a look of horrible malignity when he was angered. Mar-

garet knew the look, and dreaded it more than any blows, or than the most bitter speeches. His quiet severe speeches were bitter enough to her, Heaven knows.

He wanted to find out whether any of his friends had fallen upon Margaret during this visit, and in her capacity as teacher of drawing.

"Gaspar," she said, fearing more than she could say the effects of this excitement for him in his weak state, and anxious at any cost to set his mind at rest. "Gaspar, I saw no one who knew you. A gentleman called one day who is a friend of yours. I was upstairs, and Miss Beauchamp came to tell me. I did not go down, and I did not know his name. I begged Miss Beauchamp not to mention mine, and she promised not to do so. He did not stay more than half an hour, and the drawing-room was full of people. I am certain that no one told him there was a drawing-mistress in the house at all; and if he had heard my name, he would never think I was your sister. I wrote to tell you what I had done: I tried to make myself a little independent of you, and to help you and the children. Before I could earn anything I was called away to you, or I should have more money now to get a few comforts for you. But the children have their own money now, so I have only you to think of. Try and go to sleep, dear Gaspar, for indeed I will do my best to think for you, and to keep off every annoyance I can."

If Gaspar Marshall could be ashamed, he should have shown shame then. I think he must have known it; a faint tinge must have stolen into

the white cheeks. But he fell asleep, and slept soundly with a comparatively easy mind.

So things went on from day to day, and from week to week.

"When shall I get up?" asked Gaspar of the English doctor.

"Next week, perhaps; but you must keep yourself quite quiet, and not be anxious and impatient."

Next week came. "May I get up?" asked Gaspar, who, alas! had not had the bitter lesson of trying.

"Well—hardly yet. Another week, I think. But we might try a little carriage exercise."

Margaret ordered a droschke, the best that she could find. But the motion was uneasy, and Gaspar's face was knit with pain. He did not ask again for some time when he might get up.

To amuse him she would tell him long stories of her stay at Beauchamp Towers, though she never felt certain that the theme was altogether pleasant to him. But Margaret described vividly, and in spite of himself he would become interested: in Philippine and her sharp retorts; in Mr. Leslie, with his humility and despair; in Miss Middlemay, with her mild, far off echo from the background.

Then Margaret would show him Philippine's photograph, and the sketch she had taken of her in the Conservatory, holding the passion-flower between her long lovely fingers. And Gaspar would be amused for a little, and look at it off and on, and Margaret would leave it on the table beside him with his books. Poor books! They

were little read now. If he tried to think, the pain in his head came on immediately.

So there was little left to be done but talking; and there was little to talk of but Philippine. Jeanie Carter would not have interested him at all. The children's pretty quaint sayings fell on careless ears. He liked to hear about the Beauchamps, about the large house and gardens, about the library with its goodly store of books. When Margaret inadvertently spoke out the gratitude that was in her heart for the order Mr. Beauchamp had given her, her brother's face fell. The intellect that had been so proud and self-confident in the knowledge and strength of its own power was losing ground a little. The keen memory had dimmed. I think Gaspar forgot sometimes in what capacity Margaret had come to visit the Beauchamps and Beauchamp Towers, and when the knowledge was forced upon him again, her stories lost something of their pleasurable-ness.

Margaret was afraid to tell him of the arrival of a letter from Philippine, saying that she and her father would be in Munich in a few days' time. Mrs. Beauchamp had gone with Miss Middlemay to Ischl for the waters—her husband and daughter were to take a tour through Italy and Germany. Munich was as much in their way as anything else; in fact, Mr. Beauchamp was very anxious to see the Rubens' in the gallery.

They did not take rooms in the Hôtel Sophienbad, but in the Bavarian, where they could have them large and airy, and good attendance. But they were with Margaret every day.

Margaret judged rightly when she foresaw that had Gaspar had time to expect them, he would have been sadly disturbed. In small rooms, with no attendance but what Margaret could give him, and in what he could not help considering the somewhat undignified position of utter helplessness, the advent of strangers (especially such strangers as the Beauchamps) would have been most unwelcome.

But once aware that there was no escape from them, that Mr. Beauchamp had been in the hotel itself, and that in half an hour he would be at his bedside, Gaspar's cool self-possession came into play.

"He is a gentleman every inch, and I should say a clever one too," said the father to his daughter, after the first interview.

The doctor said it would be good for the patient to be moved daily on to a sofa, so a small sitting-room was taken opening out of his own. Margaret was spared for half an hour to buy a new blue dressing-gown and a new razor, and he received his visitors for the first time together on the next day.

The dressing-gown was of a German cut, and that distressed poor Gaspar not a little. But Margaret's fingers went to work to alter the ugly sleeve and the unbecoming collar, and when the auburn beard was spread upon it, Gaspar still looked a handsome man. Philippine, who had never seen him before, thought him more than handsome.

Gaspar could be very courteous when he liked. His courtesy to Philippine was very touching

—touching, because every attempt was such an exertion to him, and so many failed while they were still attempts only. At length he had to give up trying to raise himself when she came in with her father, as she did every day now—sometimes twice a day. He had to suffer her to pick up the book or paper that slipped off his sofa if Margaret were not close at hand.

Margaret's offices were accepted by the sufferer as a matter of course. Day and night were alike devoted to him, and hardly a murmur of gratitude or a common expression of thanks would pass his lips. But an earnest "Oh, thank you! how sorry I am!" would follow upon Philippine's least and most trifling service.

Do you think it pained Margaret to note the difference? Margaret was human, and she had human weaknesses. The first, and the second, and the third time that the fact was brought before her, a half-pained, half-rebellious feeling swelled into her heart. But conquer it she felt she must, and conquer it she did. "What is my love for him," she said to herself, "if it allows of jealousy?" And after that she forced herself to bring Philippine to the front, as it were, implored her to come often to see Gaspar, and told her, what indeed was true, that her presence was the only thing that roused him or gave him pleasure.

Mr. Beauchamp 'hired a comfortable carriage by the month, and regularly as the afternoon returned came the carriage to the door of the Hôtel Sophienbad, and then they drove together—Gaspar, Margaret, Mr. Beauchamp, and Philippine.

The party created no little excitement in Munich. Philippine's beautiful face and Margaret's dark, sad eyes attracted the attention of many a passer-by. Some wondered if all English girls were as pale as these, for Philippine's rich, delicate colour was fading little by little from her face, as Margaret's had done long before.

When, on the day we have met them, she excused herself from the drive on the plea that her head ached, and walked back slowly to the Hôtel Bavaria with her maid, Mr. Beauchamp began to fear that Munich was not a healthy place.

Gaspar was not so well either. At least he was very soon tired of the drive, and begged to be taken home earlier than usual.

CHAPTER XXV.

"In the June twilight, in the soft grey twilight,
The yellow sun-glow trembling through the rainy eve,
As my love lay quiet, came the solemn fiat,
'All these for ever—for ever—thou must leave.'"
DINAH MULOCK.

It came to Philippine's ears that Gaspar Marshall had missed her from her accustomed place in the carriage, and that he had come home terribly weak and worn. And after that she never more excused herself, and the drives would be late and long.

July melted into August, and at the end of August, the Beauchamps were still at Munich.

"I think we ought to be going back to your

mother," said the father periodically to his daughter. But she was his guiding star, and the guiding star chose to tarry over Munich for the present.

"We could not leave Margaret alone, papa, could we?" she would say.

Once she said it standing by the window of their own rooms, and looking with vacant eyes at the statues of great men on their pedestals below. She was not trying to distinguish Korner from Goethe, nor to discover if Goethe and Korner were there at all. I think both of these are of the group, looking blindly out with stony eyes upon the puny passers-by: eternity gazing upon fleeting time.

Mr. Beauchamp was reading *Galignani* in the arm-chair. They were waiting for a hasty luncheon of fruit and wine before the carriage should come round.

"Ah, poor fellow," said he, "it can't last very much longer now. I doubt if he will be here this day week. It would be merciful to wait and take the poor girl with us. Poor thing! she will break down after all this heroism. Wonderful nature it is to be sure—wonderful!" And Mr. Beauchamp turned the *Galignani* round with a sigh, and began reading the latest from England.

Philippine said it was too hot to eat. She drank a glass of water, and took up the paper, which her father had laid down. There was a long silence, broken only by the pouring out of some Marsala into Mr. Beauchamp's glass, and the crunch, crunch of the *Galignani*, as Philippine folded and unfolded, and turned it restlessly in her hands.

"Papa," she asked at last, "does Margaret know?"

Mr. Beauchamp was at that moment in the preserves at Beauchamp Towers; myriads of pheasants crossed the retina of his mind's eye. He had quite forgotten the casual remark he had made to his daughter.

"Know what, my dear?" he asked.

"That he is—so ill, papa."

"Ah, indeed! poor child, poor child! I never thought of that. It ought to be broken to her. Those doctors will deceive her to the last. How long has he been ill?"

"Seven weeks," said Philippine. She could have said "seven weeks to-day," but she forbore.

There was another long pause, and then Philippine went up-stairs to put on her hat. When she came down the carriage had been some moments at the door. They got in—in a silence which neither noticed. As they came in sight of the Hôtel Sophienbad Philippine said,—

"I will tell Margaret, papa. I think I can do it best. You are sure there is no hope?"

"There never has been any from the very first. You tell her, darling; you will do it best. But how will you manage it, eh?"

"Let us have a droschke, papa. You take him in the carriage."

Margaret was standing at the door to meet them. They had grown used to see the drawn, pained expression in her blanched face. Only Philippine noticed that there was a new look in it to-day.

Margaret came up to the carriage and took

Philippine's hand. She is always Philippine now, not Phil. "Phil" was passable when she was in her wilful humours at Beauchamp Towers. Here in Munich, with her pale face and her quiet manner, she could be none other than Philippine. Margaret fancied that Mary of Scotland might have changed just so, from the gay Dauphiness of France into the sad, beautiful woman of later days, and under greyer skies. But Philippine's grander beauty, her womanhood, had fallen upon a sudden, without cause, and under bluer skies than had seen her blithe and girlish.

All this Margaret had discovered in the last week of the time we have necessarily passed over in silence. That the change could be without cause she could not believe. Outwardly the weeks passed evenly enough—an hour in the Pinacothec, a drive, the band at the Café Reib'l—such was the order of the day for all, except that Margaret, who at other times would so have feasted on the treasures of the gallery, never shared the visits that the Beauchamps made, more as a matter of duty than of taste.

Gaspar indeed varied a little from day to day, and with his health Margaret's spirits rose and fell. Sometimes, when he had eaten some breakfast, or slept soundly for a few hours, or had come home from his drive without suffering afterwards, she would look almost happy for a little while. Then the hope would ebb and wane, to rise again, and ebb again continually. It was like the tide, a sorrowful thing, I think, always, only that there was the lurking fear beneath that one day with the ebb a something would

be carried out to the shoreless ocean, never to return—never to give hope any more, nor fear any more.

Margaret in her brave soul had tried to face the possibility from the beginning. When the doctor's visits slackened, and he told her there was nothing that he could do any longer, and when the stronger measures employed at first were replaced by opiates and refreshing drinks, things that might alleviate but could not cure, she had courage enough to recognise that the possibility had become a probability.

How bitter it was we need not ask. The God who alone could know gave her the strength sufficient to the hour.

Is this a platitude, or a fanciful imagination? They who have passed through dark waters as Margaret did, and with the same faith that upheld her, will answer. They alone are able to judge.

But Margaret was more than most women tutored in sorrow. Her whole life had been more or less uneasy and troubled. She had learnt as all children of sorrow have learnt, or ought to learn, the lesson of looking beyond herself, even when the bitterness was hers alone.

She was not quite sure that the bitterness now was hers alone.

The probability had passed into an almost certainty the evening before Mr. Beauchamp had first spoken to his daughter of the hopelessness of Gaspar Marshall's case.

Into the agony of that night it is not for us to look. We must see Margaret only as she

came down next day, as she stands with Philippine's hand at the carriage door.

I have seen pictures of St. Agnes with such a look as Margaret wore. Whoever knows such pictures will not wonder that she was strong enough to go through all things unflinchingly, nor that she spoke calmly to her friend what sounded common words. I should like materialists to have seen her then, to be haunted by the sight for ever; that they might see there is a Far-off reflected in those far-off eyes, and that a strength not ours is a verity.

"I will drive with you alone to-day," said she, anticipating Philippine's plan and words. And before Gaspar Marshall was carried down they had driven off.

The coachman had told the driver that the Café Reib'l was the point daily made for, and he drove accordingly. But Margaret stood up and ordered otherwise.

Philippine did not understand German, and she was lost in thought. She was unmanned too, if we may apply the term to a woman. A blow that unnerves some of us, nerves others. And then the night had passed over it for Margaret, and not an hour for Philippine. But after all, what was Gaspar Marshall to Philippine? The brother of her friend at least, and a dying man.

They drove on silently again through the streets. Then the town, nowhere dense, became thin and irregular. They passed under a three-arched gateway with strange old pointed-roofed towers to right and left. The driver turned round and

gave its name and history in Bavarian patois. But neither Margaret nor Philippine understood the strange jargon, nor cared to understand.

Here the road became wider, with clumps of trees on either side, and they were in the open country. A few minutes more, and the carriage stopped. Here there were gateways on either side, and at the one on the left they drew up.

The bustling, good-natured driver jumped off his seat in a moment, chattering merrily of what was to be seen. But to ears used to North-German pronunciation and idiom the dialect of Bavaria and the Tyrol is almost unintelligible.

"Where are we going to, Margaret?" asked Philippine at length, as they went through the gate on foot.

Margaret drew her hand on to her arm and held it there. That was all her answer.

What a beautiful resting-place the Germans give to their dead! What a beautiful name—God's Acre! There are no trampled graves there, no obliterated mounds, no spots uncared for and neglected. There are gardeners here as for any other public place; and how they care for their silent garden!

This one at Munich is indeed a fit habitation for the mortal of the beloved dead. Here there is a soldier's grave, on which the soldier's widow has hung her fresh wreaths not an hour ago. There, is a little child's, an iron cross overshadowing it, roses trailed about the cross and over the mound; in the centre of the cross itself a picture of the child is placed, covered with glass to protect it from the sun and rain. We can all

see what they have lost who laid their little burden down when the snow was falling over Munich, and the garden of the dead was spread with a pall of spotless white. A little further on, a woman is kneeling beside a grave. We cannot disturb her by drawing near enough to see by whom she prays and watches. So many Rizpahs come here, that the sight is common, though they have nothing viler than scattered rose-leaves to drive away from the sacred mounds.

Margaret and Philippine walked slowly and silently down the narrow paths. Neither had courage yet to look in the other's face.

There was no need for looking nor for words. Each had come out meaning to break as gently as might be to the other the sorrowful tidings known to each. Now the silence and the graves spoke for both, Philippine read Margaret's message; and Margaret felt that she had read it aright.

Margaret stopped at last, and pointed to a pillar of marble, over which autumn clematis had wreathed itself.

"I cannot read it," said Philippine in a low voice.

"Das Grab ist nicht tief," it said; "es ist nur der Fusstritt des liebenden Engels der uns sucht."

"The grave is not deep," translated Margaret firmly; "it is but the footprint of the loving angel who seeks us."

It cannot bear translation; such German sayings seldom can. The phrases are too terse, too pregnant, too full of poesy for our colder and poorer tongue.

They passed on again and again in silence.

"Will you sit down, Margaret?" asked Philippine, after a little.

"No, no!" said Margaret nervously; and she walked on quickly, moving from one path into another, till they found they had taken a circle, and were at the gate once more.

Margaret stood still then, and took a long, lingering look behind her.

"I am glad it will be here," she said.

Philippine thought this calm so unnatural, and was so alarmed by the fixed yet wandering look in Margaret's eyes, that she looked round for some seat or resting-place, and saw for the first time that just inside the gate stood a small house, the door of which was within reach. She drew Margaret, who offered no resistance, towards it.

The door was open; but there were inner doors, the upper part of glass, on either side, and these were locked.

It was rather an awful sight to come upon all unprepared. The room to the right, into which they found themselves looking, was lighted all round by large windows. The centre was bare and uncarpeted; but there were silent inhabitants of the still place.

Round the walls wooden beds or litters were standing, and five or six of these were tenanted by the dead.

Here was an old man, the sun falling upon his bald white forehead, his head turned on one side, his arms lying listlessly before him.

Here was a little child, dressed in white, and with a wreath of white flowers upon her head. She was veiled completely, but under the veil

you saw the innocent upturned marble face, the smile upon the half-opened mouth, the tiny hands folded upon the flowers that lay upon her breast.

Next to her another child, also in white, also veiled, but hardly more than a baby.

And a few places off, a young man—his forehead smooth and high, his features finely cut and firm, fixed by the hand of death, who yet moulds and re-moulds after the final blow is given, and makes every day give its account of his reign of terror.

But there was no terror here. Perfect peace was upon the young face of the man, who had lived just long enough to know that life is sweet. Now he found death sweeter.

There is a list of names outside the door; the date of death and the age are given. This is August Hendel, painter, aged twenty-one. Like Lazarus, he has been four days dead. They will take him away and bury him at eventide, and none will roll away the stone.

Not now. Not till the world's great eventide. Till then, sleep on, August Hendel, and take thy rest.

A thousand years in thy sight will be but as yesterday, seeing it is past as a watch in the night.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“O, what to her shall be the end?
And what to me remains of good?”
IN MEMORIAM.

“Come away!” said Philippine, with a shiver, drawing Margaret from the spot where she stood as if enchanted, and from which she found it hard to tear herself away. “Come away! let us go home! I *must* go home!” she said, impetuously. And Margaret suffered herself to be led through the gateway, and got mechanically into the carriage.

“I will go home with you,” said Margaret, as they neared the town.

“No, no!” returned Philippine, in the same nervous, hurried tone. “You must not come to-day—you must go back. I would rather!” she added, imploringly, as Margaret looked as if she would press the matter.

Very soon she said, “Come to a church: let us go in there—tell him to stop, Margaret!”

It was the Frauen-Kirche, that, with its sentinel steeples and its quaint, round cupolas upon their summits, stands up grey and venerable against the blue sky and the white town.

They entered by a side door, through which one or two people were passing and repassing. It was nearly the hour for vespers, and a priest with two acolytes hurried past behind one of the side altars.

Such quaint adornments these altars have. Glass boxes, with the skeletons, or supposed skeletons, of saints, lying exposed to view in a

ghastly panoply of jewels and gold and silver. The grinning skulls bedizened with emeralds and sapphires,—it looks like pure mockery of death, of God's judgment upon sin, of the dead saint himself.

Upon these, in the Frauen-Kirche, these side altars are frequently reared. Into the glass case passers-by peer as into a peep-show. For is it conceivable that any feelings of respect, to say nothing of piety, can be aroused by sights like these? Quiet church-yard graves make us think of sleep, and rest, and heaven: jewelled skeletons speak of the bitterness of mortality, of man's shamelessness, of man's folly. The hour-glass and the scythe and the skull may be good reminders sometimes, but if the skull be jewelled, what incongruous bewildering lesson does it convey!

Margaret and Philippine knelt down far out of sight of the glass boxes, and the paper flowers upon the altars. The floor was hard enough, but aching hearts forget such things as these. Only when the crowd thickened for vespers, and a low monotonous chant began from some unseen voices, did they rise and pass out.

There is a miraculous footstep on the floor, and a lame woman, telling her beads and begging alternately, hobbled towards the English ladies to tell its marvellous history. But they did not notice her, as they hurried past, anxious to avoid the crowd coming in.

There was a notice outside the door that a mass of Pergolesi was to be given next day.

"Would he like it?" asked Philippine, in an under tone.

"Oh, he is not able—but we may tell him of it," said Margaret.

"I will go home with *you* now," said Philippine. "I should like to."

Margaret looked at her, and the look meant "Can you, Philippine? he would like it if you can."

Philippine understood, and assented silently. Gaspar Marshall might be disappointed if she did not go. And besides, she felt as if she had thrown off all her weakness, and that all her strength was needed to help Margaret's brother, in any way she could.

"I am so glad we stopped there, in the church," said Philippine. "I never prayed really before, Margaret."

When they reached the hotel, the waiter said that the sick gentleman had been home for an hour. Margaret hurried up-stairs to relieve Mr. Beauchamp from his post.

But he had already gone, only for a walk, said Gaspar, and would come back to fetch Philippine.

"You should be in your room, my dearest," said Margaret, leaning over him. Of the two faces which was the most worn and pallid, it is hard to say.

He knew he should have been in his room: the laboured breathing told him so, the lassitude even to suffering in the limbs that were never used, and that knew no other feeling now. But he had remained in the sitting-room notwithstanding, watching the door with anxious eyes.

He asked Margaret to go and see if his room were ready for him, and stretched out feebly his

helpless arm from the sofa to push a chair nearer to Philippine.

It was five minutes before Margaret could return. The waiter stopped her to ask about some order; then Mr. Beauchamp, coming upstairs, stopped her again.

"How is he now?" said he. "I was a little alarmed about him during the drive. He complained so of fatigue and was so restless. I just called and asked the doctor to come in and try his pulse."

They went into the sitting-room together. Margaret had only answered the question by opening the door, and pointing to her brother with an expression of patient despair. It would have struck Mrs. Beauchamp as something unusual and hardly judicious had she found her daughter kneeling by Mr. Marshall's sofa, and alone. Mr. Beauchamp did not notice it at all, or if he did, took it as a matter of course. Gaspar had probably dropped something, and Philippine was picking it up.

Margaret, through her sorrow, saw it all. What had Gaspar done? Had Philippine withdrawn something from his hand as the door opened? And if so, what was it?

It seemed that a bitterness could still be added to the burden Margaret already bore. She could know nothing, be sure of nothing; but the suspicion that Gaspar had done something unworthy of himself and hurtful to Philippine weighed upon her heavily. Was it possible that, knowing himself to be at the gates of death, he had sought the love of one to whom in health and vigour

he had not ventured to aspire? Beautiful, trustful, child-like Philippine, is it possible he could wrong you so?

Perhaps he did not know fully the hopelessness of his case. The effect upon a nature like his would surely have been fatal, had they told him that the end was near. The doctor told Margaret that it would be fatal. And for all that she said to herself, "It is coming! it is coming!" hope asserted itself, and said, while there is life there need not be despair. We do not know how large an element of hope we keep and cling to in our direst straits, till suspense turns into certainty, and the torch of hope with a dying quiver goes out.

Little by little Margaret tried to prepare her brother for the end in which she could not as yet believe. If it should be so, cried her aching heart, and no one to tell him, no one showing him the way! If Philippine could have spoken to him of dying, of a something which should serve him in the dark valley where intellect avails not, and resistance is in vain, he would have listened perhaps, and heeded. But could Philippine at any time have spoken to him so? Out of the life of childish unrealities with which she had been surrounded, could she have risen to teach another concerning the awful realities of death and the future?

Circumstance and experience, a keen sympathy, all of which were hers, are wonderful tutors, and can teach us on a sudden many new things, and grant many new powers. But now things have changed. It seemed so at least to Mar-

garet. To Philippine she could no longer turn and bid her tell Gaspar that for him life had well-nigh ended, for what might not that ending mean for her, as well as him?

Margaret, I repeat, knew nothing. She resolved that she would know nothing. She sealed the bitter fear within her heart, and turned for help and comfort to the Father in heaven, the Father with whom is no variableness, no shadow of turning.

It became a necessity at length that she should take a decided step, and keep closely to the way she had chosen.

Philippine's young beautiful life, or Gaspar's last days of sickness—which should be considered first—which was to be sacrificed to the other?

Her love for Philippine was that of a loving friendship: her love for Gaspar was an all-absorbing love. When, after much struggling with self, more wrestling with God, she laid aside the last for the first, it seemed to her that she had given herself a more bitter pang than death itself could give. For death would take Gaspar from his pain; and she must needs add another pain, that would embitter, so she believed, his dying hour, to the weary suffering he was already called upon to bear.

But once certain that she had chosen rightly, Margaret was not one to flinch or waver. Maybe she was still in time. The irrevocable word might still be all unspoken. And between this, the promise-binding, and the shadow of the far-off promise that had rested for many days upon Philippine's face, there lies a gulf as wide as

many oceans. This Margaret knew, with a woman's instinct, and that the gulf should not be passed was her firm determination.

Gaspar was going, so the bitter tidings told; what would the love of a few days be to him? If he went not, if God spared him, it were time enough when health and strength had come again to pursue the love he reached to. Philippine was in Margaret's eyes a sacred trust; to be given account for to God and to her parents. Mr. Beauchamp's happy blindness made it but the more needful that some one else should shepherd the happiness that seemed to be her dower. Alas, poor Margaret! she knew too well the face of sorrow not to dread its turning upon Philippine.

Gaspar heard of Pergolesi's mass in the Frauen-Kirche. He was restless and uneasy; he liked music; he would go. The carriage was ordered, and with great difficulty he was lifted in. Philippine sat opposite him with face averted and compressed lips. Now and then she took a furtive glance at the wan features before her. But Gaspar's eyes were closed.

They were all silent; how should they be otherwise? It hardly seemed that the prostrate figure amongst them was still in life. He had never been so speechless nor so regardless of outer things.

When they came to the church door there was the same difficulty in lifting him out. Two street porters, Mr. Beauchamp, and the *valet de place* were not more than enough to move the helpless weight. Two women pushing aside the curtain,

crossed themselves as they came upon the dying man. "Heilige Maria!" said a child to his mother, "ist er todt?"

The lame and blind beggars within the door forgot their whining story as the little procession moved slowly by. The dumb man used his tongue to make an exclamation of wonder.

Gaspar was laid upon a seat, and his head supported by pillows. When the pain of moving had subsided a little, the eyes closed again. Not till the organ had played a few bars did he open them.

"This is not Pergolesi," said he faintly.

Margaret rose and asked a monk standing by if this were not Pergolesi's mass.

He answered in English—

"Not to-day. They have changed it. A bishop has died, and he lies there, near the high altar. This is Mozart's Requiem."

"It has been changed," said Margaret, leaning over Gaspar; "this is Mozart, he says."

"I know," said he peevishly, "the Requiem. Let us go home; I am so tired. Can't you call them to carry me out, Margaret?"

As they carried him out, they passed a coffin laid upon the ground near the high-altar. A pall of black embroidered with gold was stretched over it, and on this there lay the mitre, the crozier, and a mass of flowers.

Margaret whispered something in Philippine's ear. She hesitated a moment, and then stooped and gathered a flower or two from the pall.

She looked at Margaret again, and then gave them into Gaspar's hand, lying limp beside him.

They were asphodels. He took them silently and lifted them to his face. Perhaps he has accepted the message at last.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Shall we drive home, Marshall?" asked Mr. Beauchamp tenderly, when the invalid had been laid in the carriage and pillowed as before.

"No, no! To the Englische Garten and the band."

So they drove off, a sad company for so gay a scene.

It was the same sight almost every day. Here a tall thin officer with a clanking sword, a tiny dark-eyed Austrian wife on his arm. There a group of lank-haired students making for the café and the beer-tables. In the distance, under the trees, the café itself, the little chatting group of idlers; some fair-haired Americans, recognisable from afar by their dress, their pretty faces, and their unmistakable accent. And last but not least, Gungl's band, playing music such as only Germany can give us.

As the English carriage drew up, the last notes of an irresistible waltz ended in crisp melodious chords, dropped like so many pearls from the mouths of the exhausted bandsmen.

As they wiped their instruments, and raised their hats for relief to the poor heads so used to hot sun and exertion, they had time to look

round and take note of the strangers, now become a familiar sight. Some of them noticed that the ill gentleman did not sit up as before, the better to enjoy their music.

Perhaps it was not quite the thing for people "of quality," as Mrs. Pickering would have said, to countenance even in the distance the café and its environs. It is not thought correct in most parts of Germany, but Englishmen abroad are never correct. Sometimes it would be well if they were more so.

But when the best of music, and given to the greatest perfection, can be enjoyed for threepence, fivepence, or fivepence-halfpenny, as the case may be, why should we not enjoy it and be thankful? The foreigners "of quality," who prefer hot rooms in a street, or the amusement of cooking and housekeeping, excuse English people who go among the "*gemeine Leute*" in public resorts. The English, it is well known, are mad, and may do anything.

After a pause the instruments were relifted to their place. The music-leaves were turned over on their stands. Another pause, and then a clash of melodious discords. What a wonderful thing is music, and such music! How it sends the blood thrilling through one's veins, and how it changes phlegmatic people into enthusiasts!

It is provoking when some enthusiast or would-be enthusiast overdoes his part, and makes himself an object of ridicule. Need I say he is never a German, but, alas! one of our own countrymen?

He stands with his head down, his hands folded, his eyes melancholy and wild, his shoulders bent

as if the incubus of his emotions were too much for his lank frame. Five minutes before the instruments are tuned, he is all attention and his chair is turned in a marked manner towards the stand. He clutches at the back, as if to a frame like his the first chord would be a galvanic battery.

The first chord is struck: he hears a voice behind him. Two men are talking together about ten yards off. He rushes at them headlong. "Hush!" says he, wearing the face of rather a tame Fury, and touching the nearest on the back while he lifts up his warning and reproachful fingers deprecatingly.

The man he touches looks slowly round over his shoulder, but by this time the enthusiast has re-settled himself in the attitude of profound attention. Did Newton look as profound when he wrote the *Principia*?

"Englander!" remarks the German, with a shrug, and a sardonic smile, as he puts his arm into that of his friend. He can tell the enthusiast every note that has been played, the key, the composer, whether it be symphony, or pastorage, or sonata. When the selection is over, he will show his approval or disapproval by silence or a short energetic applause. But all the time he will smoke and talk, and drink his beer in apparent indifference.

There was just such an enthusiast at Munich, and Philippine's ire had been greatly raised against him. Now his antics were thrown away upon her; the gay scene had no attractions left. Why were they here, why had Gaspar chosen to come

here? So they all thought, who knew him to be so near Eternity.

The overture to *Zampa* finished, they noticed a polka as the next thing on the programme. They asked him if they should drive on.

But he said he wished to hear it all. Was it Strauss's? What was the name of it? So he asked.

After the polka there was a long pause, as the conclusion of the first part of the concert. He permitted that the carriage should drive round the Garten, on hearing that Philippine felt the heat.

When they returned, the band struck up an air of Mendelsohn's. It was not in the list, but it is not an unusual thing to add or omit, at the request of some one in authority. I suppose that officer in blue with the black and gold helmet, who is stepping off the stand, had effected the change.

"Es ist bestimmt in Gottes Rath"—so the air is called, from the first words of the mournful volkslied, to which the great musician lent his music.

Most people know the song, and how the words go on: the burden, Death, and the last parting, and the far off "Wiederseh'n."

Gaspar knew well the song: Margaret knew it too. To these the air suggested of course the words. Mr. Beauchamp and Philippine not knowing, wondered that Gaspar became impatient and restless again, and that he begged to drive on.

Margaret laid her hand upon his arm and said, "Stay, dearest—if you can." But he would not change his mind, and the weary wheels went round.

They were emblems of the restlessness, the vain flight before the dread messenger, that Gaspar Marshall to his last hour was keeping up.

All that night Margaret sat up with him, talking to him in the short intervals between his disturbed and unquiet sleep, reading to him when he would allow her, moving him when his position became uneasy, cooling his parched lips with iced water or milk.

What a long night it was, how loudly the clocks ticked inside and boomed without, and how chill was the face of the morning as it looked into the sufferer's room, through the cracks of the half-closed Venetians.

Margaret fell into a heavy sleep towards morning, at her post by the bedside. She awoke with a start to find the house astir, and a letter unopened upon her lap.

It was from Philippine, but the writing was straggling and hurried. Mrs. Beauchamp had telegraphed for them to meet her at Innsbrück, as she was laid up there. She, Philippine, had tried to see Margaret that morning before five o'clock, but hearing that she was in her brother's room, and that he slept, she had written the hurried note instead. But Innsbrück was but little more than half a day's journey, and—"Papa has promised me to come back," ended the letter, "so I shall see you again very soon, Margaret--in a few days' time."

We are very ungrateful for present mercies. Margaret did not know what a comfort the Beauchamps had been to her till she looked out on the quiet town, the first thin blue smoke rising

into the clear air, and knew that she was alone. Alone with the dying.

The day wore through wearily and painfully. There was no peace upon Gaspar's face, no resignation, no hallowed silence about the dying-bed.

For it was a dying-bed now: he would never rise and stand upon his feet again. He would never pass through the low doorway till strangers' hands carried him, like St. Peter, whither he would not go.

Margaret did not know this. Mercifully, like little children, we are led step by step, little by little; and of the next step we know as little as of the hundred years hence we shall never see. The doctor had said Gaspar would probably linger through the winter. Margaret was weighing the possibility of having the children and Elspet sent out, so that she might in some measure fulfil her task of keeping them beneath her eye. She had spoken of it to Philippine, and she had encouraged the plan. In the long night, the letter bidding Elspet to be ready to come before long had been mentally written and re-written. It was well that there was something to distract her thoughts from time to time from the present and the impending sorrow.

Besides, so far from giving up all hope, Margaret clung to the idea that God would raise up her brother even from the gates of death. Life without him was so awful a prospect, such a fearful blank and void, that it was little wonder that, look it in the face as she would and did, she could not realise it, she could not grasp it; it was a ghastly phantasm that danced before

her for ever, but a phantasm without shape or form.

When it took form, as it did at times, the bitterness of the hour can only be conceived of by those who have loved and suffered as Margaret did. Out of her Marah she would providentially be roused by some call of duty when a word from Gaspar, a sigh, a restless movement told her he was there still—still to be loved and cared for, still, maybe, to be saved.

So He leads us through our dark valleys and deep waters, by paths we know not of. He weeps over our suffering, and like oil upon the ocean fall His tears. He wept over Lazarus, about to rise. Shall He not weep over the many whose sleep must be so long?

As the day stole on, Margaret began to see how it must end.

The doctor came, stood by the bedside, shook his head, and said he would come again at evening. Gaspar did not seem to be aware of his presence, though his eyes wandered restlessly about the room.

When the day was waning a clergyman staying in the hotel came at Margaret's bidding and prayed beside his bed.

"Peace be to this house," said he. But peace came not.

Margaret, with both hands clasped upon her brother's, knelt beside him too. The beautiful prayers to that God who is "the Lord of life and death" were read and offered up, as the incense of a heart well-nigh broken.

Would he not join in them too? Had he

nothing to beseech for—no mercy, no forgiveness?

No Amen followed upon the prayers, no look of sorrow or remorse stole into the ashy face. Once, when Margaret would have urged him to repeat the words of comfort or of hope, he withdrew the hand she held, as his only answer.

It did not grieve her: she was too full of grief to notice the further drop of bitterness in the brimming cup. With head bowed upon her empty hands, she besought the pitiful Father for him who prayed not for himself.

If it might be possible! if it might be possible!

But if not—O then, that the dark way might be made light for him! that he might call even once for mercy, and that the Eternal One might listen to the call!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

After a few hours, night set steadily in. The door below opened less and less frequently. The clatter of dishes and of tongues ceased. Feet passing in the street, rang a strange hollow echo through the empty town.

The lamp-lighter, with his ladder, had finished his work, and a dim glow fell here and there in patches on the white pavement. A sister of mercy, leading a little child by the hand, passed swiftly and silently up the street, the light falling upon her as she neared the lamps, and showing

the silver crucifix on her breast, and the badge of her order just above. She looked at the straw laid down before the windows of the hotel, and crossed herself in haste. The little child crossed herself too, and said an Ave Maria as she clung to the black skirt of her protector.

Where were they going to, these two? Passing from where, to where? From a house of death, I think, to the home of the black-robed sisterhood. Gaspar Marshall, will you suffer none to lead you from your house of death into a home prepared for you?

Now he is awake, and tossing restlessly to and fro. Now he sleeps, a heavy, uneasy slumber, with laboured breathing, that breaks off suddenly now and then, and brings Margaret from her trembling knees to her more trembling feet, while the fixed stony eyes fall from looking on God's face to the poor struggling human face before her, and she cries, "Gaspar, Gaspar! O my darling!" but has no answer, and no reply.

After a while the power of prayer leaves her. O hardest, bitterest grief of all, when sorrow's face turns stony with despair, and God's hand presses too heavily on the bowed head to allow of looking up, even to Him, even to the outstretched rod of mercy or of judgment. It is both judgment and mercy here, surely; only the mercy is hidden as by a veil, and thank God the one watcher by this dying bed discerns not the judgment. It would be bitter for her, indeed, poor Margaret, did she see the last without the first.

Some say that the devil's supreme hour is

this—when like the Holy One, on whom all suffering culminated, we cry out no longer, “Lord save us!” but “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” If it be his hour, thank Heaven it is a short one! After a time the rod in striking causes the waters to flow out upon the barren soil, from the stony rock; and then because we rebel no longer, we are blessed.

But the agony (to one who believes in prayer of seeing a beloved life ebbing little by little, falling like sand between the clasped fingers, and knowing that the power to pray has been taken from us—does anything approach the anguish, in this grief-full world?

It is then that thoughtlessness, mockery, earthly aids, and comforters are shorn away, and the soul stands face to face with him in whose hands are the issues of life. It is then that what we have been used to call visionary and unreal, becomes sublime and awful in its reality. It is then that we look upon the anxieties, the disappointments, the many carping cares that in our cramped horizon have seemed so vast and so important, as worthless specks upon the turning-page of life. It is then, with the windows of eternity opened upon us, that life and the past shrivel into nothing, before Death and the awful Present. It is then, with an instinctive shrinking of the still human soul from the vast mysteries of God, that we turn round on a sudden to the life before us—the little span called life, which by-and-by we shall call by a fitter name. It is then that with eyes purified by the insight into heaven, we use their brightness to look across our way

on earth, and cry out passionately in the poet's words—

“O love, my love, if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thyself in any spring,
How then should sound upon life's darkening slope,
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of hope,
The wind of death's imperishable wing?”

It is then that, losing sight for an instant of the Father's face, we forget to pray our Father's prayer—“As in heaven, so on earth! Amen.”

Doubtless He knows our helplessness. Maybe our silence is the voice to reach Him more than all—the silence of a little child who turns in sorrow from the mother who has chidden him in love. O golden silence, enter into His presence and tell the story words may not speak!

I think He hears. Gaspar moves in his restless slumber. He opens his lips: Margaret bends over him to catch the sound. She thinks he may have asked her to pray.

The words of the Litany came to her unconsciously.

“By all his sufferings, by his precious death and burial, by his glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost—Good Lord deliver us!”

Did he repeat the last words, or was it an echo in the silent room?

There is no time for wondering, no moment for delay. Even now the spirit is hovering on the open lips, looking for the last time through the restless eyes, poising itself on the brink of

its human dwelling-place, for its flight into the place not made with hands.

"In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment—Good Lord deliver us!"

He does not hear. He is wandering. He speaks fast and eagerly; but even Margaret cannot understand.

"Gaspar!" she cries. "God is taking you to Himself; say good-bye to me, Gaspar—kiss me once! Just once before you go!"

She bent over him. He started up suddenly from his pillow.

"My God!" he cried. "I am dying!" Then he struggled, a last long struggle. A gasp, a sigh—he fell back upon her shoulder.

The eyes were still open, and still Margaret whispered in his ear: "Pray!" she would say at first, but now she knew he could not, and prayed for him.

"Into Thy hands!" she said, "into Thy hands!" as she swayed gently to and fro, the heavy head lying still upon her heart.

But even now he is no longer hers. He has passed into the hands to which she commends him. The last struggle is over—let him rest.

"Who made thee a judge or a ruler?" a voice is saying. The time for earthly judgment is past: he is before another tribunal now.

All we know of, all we can see, lies in the dim twilight on this ruffled bed.

Rather in the arms of that patient love that has been his through life, and now through death.

She will not leave him go; she will not lay

the burden on the cold pillow. Here—next her heart; the grey eyes looking into hers with awful constancy; the parted lips making no response; the hands stiffening on the coverlet before her; the pale forehead relaxing into the peace of sleep, the very hair waxing cold upon her shoulder.

What a beautiful time is the night for dying! No bustle breaks upon the solemn stillness, no outer words jar upon those last whose price is nameless; no cold bright day-light looks in through open windows on the dying face, with its hard, heartless sounds of business or of play; no stranger comes to break upon the long vigil of the mourner, and its bitter sweetness.

Gaspar died in the night. The dawn saw the Angel of Death issuing into the grey silence.

Not till the Frauen-Kirche tolled out the hour of six, did the door open, and a woman in black make her way across the room.

She took Margaret in her arms, and led her gently away. Speechless, tearless, and unresisting, it was not a hard matter.

This friend took her to her own room.

“Make her lay down, ma’am; she has not slept these three weeks, they tell me,” said the maid.

But the lady knew better. “She could not lie down while she is like this. Here, my poor child”—and she led her to an arm-chair, a little way from the window. The blind was half up. Margaret could see the blue sky above, but not the stirring of life in the street below. The lady had wished it to be so.

For an hour she was left alone; and when her friend returned, she had not altered her position

by the movement of hand or foot. Then she knelt by her, talked to her, smoothed her forehead, kissed her once upon her lips, and left her again. After that, Margaret fell to the ground in a heavy swoon.

CHAPTER XXIX.

“O that ‘had ’ how sad a passage ’t is!”
SHAKSPEARE.

As the weary days flew by, that time came for Margaret which comes to all, after the first fierceness of misery has passed away. A time when she must look up and know herself still living. A time when she must realise that the blow which had stunned could not kill. That duty was no phantasm now, any more than it had been before, though pleasure having come out and separated itself therefrom, its face could wear no sunshine any longer, and stern necessity sat ruling in the place of love.

It mattered nothing to Margaret that our eyes are not as hers. Love is love, and a poet says,—

“Good love, howe’er ill-placed,
Is better for a man’s soul in the end
Than if he loved ill what deserves love well.”

Besides, by the prayer of our childhood and of our Lord, we dare not will away the blessing from all but the deserving. Their trespasses as

our trespasses—His love to us as ours to them. We cannot take away the one, and pray still to be given the other. It was happy, too, for Margaret, that she could at most times honestly believe that Gaspar had not died hardened and impenitent. That he was reserved she knew; that he had feelings and yearnings unexpressed she thought she knew. It was no marvel that she was thus deceived, for at times there broke through the cynical, biting, and powerful tone of his writings (not his own, but he was a good scholar of his school) fitful gleams of deeper thoughts, holier aspirations, of poetry in fact, in its fullest sense. For the language of the soul in its happier moods is surely the only true poetry.

It was pitiful that Gaspar Marshall's flights were so few and far, that he contented himself with probing deep social wounds, irritating old scars, and then leaving them by the wayside, like the Levite, for public inspection. We need Samaritans nowadays. The seers have spoken and the prophets foretold, but God is calling for labourers into his harvest. Will not some few of the vast army of fault-finders leave their ranks, now they have learnt their duties and got the secrets of the campaign by heart, and join the silent plodding army that is propping the strongholds and bravely combating the evils their brothers are content to flaunt?

Gaspar's papers, like autumn leaves, were strewn now about the place that had known him and should know him no more. They had told sad enough tales to any eyes but Marga-

ret's; to her they sometimes gave a further thrill of pain.

But she would look at the date and be satisfied. "November 18th." Two years ago. Ah, that was a long time. Gaspar had thought very differently before he went away. She could not say before he "died" as yet. Even the burial, with its flowers and peacefulness, the blue sky and sunshine above, the quiet tread of decent bearers instead of the rattling ghastly pageantry of our English funerals, could not rob death completely of its sting. We are not meant, I think, to lose all dread. We cannot trust entirely, unless we fear and sorrow.

Margaret would suffer no one to touch the desk so sacred in her eyes. With her own hands she looked through piles of useless paper, letters answered and unanswered, scraps of manuscript notes, for the most part never turned to account.

Some notes were. Certain kind friends from among Gaspar's enemies, the publishers, had sounded a warning note before a shameless plagiarism or two had come to light. They had done their work delicately, and it had been as delicately received. No trace of this transaction remained in the records of either party, certainly not in Gaspar's. Margaret was saved this pang.

But there were traces enough of the green fruit shaken from the tree before its time—of golden opportunities lost, and strong eloquent promises come to nought.

Here is a letter:—

"Your offer is tempting, I acknowledge, or would be so to most. As to my capabilities for

carrying it through, I have little doubt. I can do most things I attempt. But, with a bow, I must decline. Your subject required not *thought* only, power and originality, but some amount of reading up. This last is the obstacle. Should I devote myself to any one object for the period required for this one, my mind would lose its balance. And the mind is a machine not lightly to be esteemed, when it happens to be the mind of an author, more especially. Thanks, all the same, for thinking of me."

(*Copy.*)

Whether he wrote the letter honestly we cannot tell. He may have believed his own sophisms, his shallow excuses, or not. There are so many unsolved problems connected with the dead. It is all one vast uncertainty, one unanswered wondering. Why, how, when—the voiceless silence lays her finger on curious lips and says, "Never—by-and-by—never!"—like the "clock on the stairs"—of Longfellow's poem.

In old days Margaret's common sense and honesty of judgment would have wrestled stoutly with her love and esteem for her brother over this letter. As it was, it lay before her in his writing, as Raphael's unfinished Transfiguration before weeping Italy. It was no time for criticism; the day for that had passed away.

When all the bundles were tied and laid aside in their several packets, and the desk locked, the key taken, the meaning of what she had been doing came afresh upon poor Margaret. She could cry now, so the first deep grief had passed, thank God.

Her friend found her so, exhausted with weeping, her head upon the carpetless floor. It has come to be looked upon as a sensational exaggeration, this attitude of intense sorrow. All truths are abused, yet some truths *are* truths. Women who have passed through great mental suffering will know better than to deem it an overdrawn picture. Men, I have heard, in bodily suffering, have been brought down to the earth too. There are times when trial seems to have become a *substance*, insupportable in its weight; when we feel that it is no longer for us to stand up as heretofore in 'God's sun and daylight, we, from whom He has thought fit to turn away his face. It is no sensational whim of imagination, depend upon it, that has drawn the Magdalen outstretched beneath her sorrow at the Master's feet.

It was well for Margaret that by the way called "chance," this Master raised up for her a friend in her friendlessness. And as yet she had no power of judging for herself. With the necessity for action, strength had seemed to come; now it ebbed steadily away.

Philippine never came back to Munich. Mrs. Beauchamp had not intended that she should. Mr. Beauchamp, persuaded on the way to Innsbrück by his daughter that their return was imperative and most advisable, was, on his way to England, as strongly persuaded by his wife that it would have been a step of glaring imprudence. There is such a thing as an honest change of opinion. Mr. Beauchamp proved it. Beautiful Philippine obtaining access to his susceptible ear, and looking at him with her wonderful

eyes, found no difficulty in bringing him to see things from her point of view. She was honest, and for the most part used her art only to show him white as white. Perhaps his wife's aspirations were higher, her powers less justly used; Mrs. Beauchamp could prove *black* was white. We are, alas! all faulty, because all human. We need not be too hard on Philippine, if she were human enough, woman enough, sometimes to prove her white a grey.

She had her way in one thing. Charlie and Dolly were transplanted from Fern Hill to the Towers.

What a change it was! Little wayside daisies finding themselves suddenly in a palace-garden could not experience a greater. But children are philosophers, sometimes almost stoics. Everything comes natural to them after all, though they enjoy life so purely and intensely. Everything except sorrow.

It is so with us too, I think—we “children of a larger growth.” Joy sits so lightly on us, sorrow makes us writhe beneath its burden. A little care is too much for many; who ever murmured over too much bliss?

Surely this speaks a great truth to us, leading us back to the time when sin was not, on to the time when sin shall be no more. To be sorrowful, to be sinful, is *not* our destiny, else would sorrow and sin be easier to bear. Joy in God's counsels, was foreordained to be the lot of man, and when it comes to us, even now—even through the mists we have drawn around us, and that man has come to believe the atmosphere for

man—we take it almost unconsciously, too often without acknowledgment, and are not overwhelmed by it at all. The God of nature made man for happiness; it comes to him naturally. Man for himself has made travail and sorrow; it wearies him, jars him, frets him with its unnatural, discordant presence.

Charlie and Dolly took their new delights with philosophical equanimity, while Miss Middlemay was astonished beyond measure.

“O dear!” she would murmur to herself, as she picked a white thread off the drawingroom carpet, or dusted Mrs. Beauchamp’s boudoir writing-set with a clean handkerchief; “O dear! well, it *does* astonish me! The articles of *vertu*, the flowers, the parterres; and, O dear, the vast do-main.” And here Miss Middlemay always paused, the vastness oppressing her so greatly as she approached the word “do-main” that it was doled out in an awestruck and prolonged whisper. Upon her recovery she would resume her soliloquy, for a dialogue was a treat not often bestowed upon her at the Towers.

“O dear—to be sure—yes—the articles of *vertu*—pooh, poo’” (here Miss Middlemay dusted a Dresden statuette, poising one lank finger on the top of its three-cornered hat, so that even the gentle zephyr of her breath should not endanger so precious an article of *vertu*. And the wonderful—and mar-vellous—pooh, poo’, poo’—specimens of the—poo’, poo’—ancient arts. And O! my dearest *dear* Mrs. Beauchamp, how can you! No, I will *not* disturb you—let me put it down! No, I will *not* remain here any longer. O no! I was

fearful of *disturbing* you, or I should have ventured to offer to do anything. O no! I will *not* remain here. I will walk a little in the grounds of this vast do— A footstool? *Not* a footstool? O, how I *do* like to see you so! And now I am going away to take a *little* ramble in these vast do—” Mrs. Beauchamp crumpled up the newspaper impatiently, and the remainder of Miss Middlemay’s sentence is thus unhappily lost to posterity, but the quick-witted will perhaps guess the probable conclusion.

This is, however, a digression. Philippine’s unselfish thought had been to relieve her friend’s already heavy heart from any further care concerning the children. It was a kinder thought in the will than in the deed. Margaret just needed something to arouse her now. Had she known the little ones to be alone at Fern Hill with Elspet, she must have thought of them first, and she would have done so. It was only natural—or what in our unnatural state has come to be called so—that, having this responsibility taken off her hands, she should for a time suffer herself to succumb to the full weight of her desolating sorrow. Numbed in mind as in body, she sat during these weary days at Munich with bright tearless eyes and drawn wasted face, apparently unconscious of all that passed around her. Mrs. Armytage, her friend in need, more kind than judicious, left her to herself when she should have been spoken to and comforted, and spoke to her when she was not able to bear it. If she had followed the course she at first had taken, it would have been better for them both,

leaving Margaret time to exhaust some of the sorrow too sacred not to be spent in secret, then rousing her from her stolid despair, picturing all that could excite her tears, encouraging her to face the subject, to speak of it, if possible, at last.

But it is easier to lay down plans of action than to bring them into play. Mrs. Armytage grew thin with anxiety over her worse-than-patient, and could devise no means of cure. If she had knelt by Margaret's side and prayed aloud, prayed out the cares upon her mind, and spoken in prayer of the great anguish before her, this, I think, might have melted Margaret to more frequent tears.

The necessity for opening the desk, which lack of funds and letters from lawyers and creditors made before long imperative, was the first thing that broke down the iron sorrow and gave relief. Mrs. Armytage took a hint from this, and began to see that inaction was no longer to be prescribed for Margaret, seeing that to so heavy a heart it never could be *rest*.

So before six suns had set over Gaspar's grave Margaret was moving steadily away from Munich. The great "Bavaria" among the trees stood changeless and unmoved as the train with its changed burden passed beneath her—a stern impassive Fate, untouched by human sorrows and vicissitudes. God's will seemed hardly less stern to Margaret. She will know better by-and-by, when she has come to herself again; she will see better by-and-by, when her eyes have been washed in a few more wholesome human tears; when God's daylight shall be visible again to sight dimmed for a little by His lightning.

CHAPTER XXX.

“Connaissez-vous cette terre où les
orangers fleurissent, que les rayons des
cieux fécondent avec amour?”

MADAME DE STAËL.

It is the beginning of November, but there are no November fogs, no greatcoats and comforters, no brief, dull, cloudy days where our story leads us.

There are long straggling, narrow streets, grey with time, sacred from association, and beautiful in spite of much that is distasteful, or would be so in any other place to foreign senses.

For there are dirty street-corners, and dirtier houses, patches of pavement much resembling the floor of an ill-kept stable, narrow alleys paved only with mud and littered rags. Here are beggars, with loathsome sores, pursuing strangers with their dolorous entreaties. And here, too often in squalor and misery, are herded the remnants of that great nation whose glory and whose history are in the past.

Surely when the glory departed the beauty and the enchantment of place and people alike remained. It needs enchantment truly to cover Rome's deformities with the mantle it wears, and which no man can deny her; no man (I beg his pardon) but that one who was dissatisfied at finding the Coliseum out of repair.

The beginning of November is early for the English-Roman season. As yet the churches without the walls are thinly peopled, and those within little besieged by flaring “Murrays” and

irreverent curious tourists. The great crowd comes in before Christmas time and for the Christmas ceremonies, and now saints' days and festivals pass by without much recognition from the outer heretic world.

Here and there fresh English faces, shaded off with fair English hair, may be seen moving through the broken columns of the Palace of the Cæsars, riding lean Roman horses on the Appian Way, or picking maiden-hair from the ruined "boxes" of the Roman matrons over-looking the arena of the Coliseum.

But in another fortnight's time the groups will be more frequent, the row of circling carriages on the Pincian Hill will have swelled their number and increased their ranks, and military bands in the service of his holiness, Pius IX., will play from the stand fronting the red sunsets, and the great dome of St. Peter, at such times standing out black in its grandeur over the hazy holiday town.

For there seems not much reality of life in Rome. Perhaps the stirring deeds she has given birth to, and the heroes she has reared, have exhausted this proud mother of the past. She is sleeping now a long drowsy slumber. Maybe, like a giant refreshed, she may awake still. She, at least, is worthy of it, whatever her sons of to-day may be.

Changes within the short cycle of a year have visited her already. What their entire issue will be, how her people will come out from the violent reaction that *must* take place where small tyrannies and narrow restraints have been suddenly re-

moved, and the thralldom of superstition is broken loose after a reign of almost undisturbed serenity, it must be hard for the wisest to say. To readjust her balance, nature will recoil to her opposite extreme in the first moment of conscious freedom. This freedom may, for a time, be license, and superstition give place to irreligion; but it will not necessarily be for long. If God will save Italy, He can save her even so as by fire.

At the time at which our story leads us to Rome, the city was papal still. Two years had yet to run their course before Victor Emmanuel walked in, a bloodless conqueror; rather, a welcome guest and deliverer. Rome knew then nothing of coming events, and the same crowds fell before the gilded carriage and outriders of the Pope as the procession, day by day, passed from the Piazza San Pietro to the Corso, or the gardens of the Villa Borghese, that later welcomed his enemy with cries of "Viva il Rè!" and hailed his advent with what from apathetic Italians was no slight ovation. But to a greater than Pius the Ninth has human nature shown its fickle colours in like manner.

And to those who think harshly of the Roman people no receipt can we offer, to recall their lost charity, better than that they come to Rome itself.

Beautiful in life as she has indeed been, she holds in death a beauty even greater—a beauty that silences criticism and defies the decrees of our colder judgment. As Margaret, ay, and Gaspar's worst enemy, held their peace now he was gone into the "silent land," so over Rome in her

tranquil slumber none stays to cavil at her direst faults.

Nay, a cold judgment is a thing impossible in Rome. The Lascio Passare does not include it, when it warily allows conventional strangers to tread this sacred ground. There is an intoxication in the place indescribable to all, inexplicable to any who have not felt its magic influence. Our grey murky skies have surely something to do with our frigid temperament and grave faces, for how they change under the blue heaven, and the soft fanning of Italian winds, and the smell of orange-trees heavy laden in the convent gardens all around!

They will not long be laden, these fruitful, dark-leaved boughs. Even now two English-women are watching the gathering-in from their windows; their back-windows looking across a dismal, narrow street into an orange garden embraced on three sides by a monastery, and on the fourth by a high wall and railing.

The sun is falling in the heaven already. His slant rays are creeping little by little from floor to wall, and wall to roof. Only here and there a happy orange on a topmost branch smiles out mellow in the glow.

Alas, poor orange! not much longer will it hang there and smile. A brown-cloaked Capuchin is shuffling heavily from tree to tree, rifling the golden fruit, and ruthlessly casting it piece by piece into an uninviting pouch.

Perhaps it is for the poor. For at certain hours in crowds, and at all hours in twos and threes, men and women, more miserable even

than the unwashed brotherhood, assail the convent door. (In Rome convent and monastery seem to be synonymous terms, and do not convey the distinctions we associate with each separate word.) And though cleanliness and godliness do not go hand in hand in Capuchin communities, the religion which James speaks of as being "pure and undefiled," in so far as the helping of the fatherless and widows is concerned, is carried out heartily and readily. No beggar goes away unaided, leaving his malediction behind. Soup at certain hours, for which the recipients bring roomy vessels, and broken bits at others, are day by day doled out; and if the work be done not grudgingly nor of necessity, as there is little reason to believe it is, it goes some way, I think, towards making up for the filthy habits and persons of the donors.

Filth is apparently as necessary to qualify them for *bonâ-fide* Capuchins as is the brown dress of their order. Without linen or under-clothing of any sort, they wear their coarse habit and hood next to their persons for the space of three years, by night as well as by day. In the same gown that touches us as we pass them in the street, they have slept, eaten, risen to attend their midnight mass, for any period within three years that the taste or imagination of the passer-by may suggest. One might fancy that the most stiff-necked and high-minded must allow that infallibility had proved itself fallible in encouraging and rearing such abuses; that a little deviation, at least, is apparent from the days when without scrip or sandals, it is true, but we have no reason

to believe in other attire than such as figured forth the purity within, Jesus Christ, the Great Elder Brother, and his disciples, went about doing good.

But we must remember that we are in Rome, and so must cease to criticise. Even Capuchins look picturesque and historic with the haze of our enchantment hanging over them.

So thought one of the English women by the open window as the Frate held the last orange between his (luckily far-off) fingers, and then dropped it hesitatingly on its fellows in the pouch.

One English woman, I have said. The other has long ago ceased to watch the brother, and is looking with sad grief-ful eyes at the last broad rays of the setting sun.

We should hardly recognise in her the Margaret of old days—the Margaret who had life enough left in her to feel little cares, and to weep at small sorrows, as other women do.

Mrs. Armytage often wishes she cared now. She is far too patient, too ready to acquiesce in everything, too careless about what shall become of her from hour to hour. She refuses her friend nothing, but she cares for nothing. The sad pale face looks just the same whether she has been a day left to herself and to her own thoughts, or whether she is seeing other faces and other scenes.

They had gone to Venice from Munich by easy stages. Would Margaret come to Venice? her friend had asked. Oh, yes, Margaret would come.

After that, would she come to the Italian lakes for a few weeks? Mrs. Armytage would like it

if it suited Margaret. Oh, yes, Margaret would come. How kind Mrs. Armytage was to her! She should like any place Mrs. Armytage went to.

And after the lakes, should they go to Rome? Mrs. Armytage meant to winter abroad. She had never seen Rome, and it was so beautiful. Would Margaret like to come?

Oh yes, Margaret would like to go with her. Was Rome a good climate for Mrs. Armytage's weak chest? If so, they had better go to Rome.

But there was no heart in anything, and her friend could see it well. She herself was a woman of warm feelings in some respects; at least, her heart was large enough to entertain a true affection for Margaret—her foundling, as she would call her. But the depths of a nature like Margaret's were unknown to her. Perhaps this, by throwing a certain mystery, raised the subject of it in her estimation.

She herself had known sorrow. Was she not a widow who two years before had been a wife? One Henry Armytage had been laid in the grave, who had held the utmost love she had the power to give. No lover in the past had been his rival; no possible future husband need disturb his rest. Mrs. Armytage never intended to marry again. She wore a black locket containing his hair and picture. As yet she had not discarded her black dress: I think it is more than probable that she never will. She had wept a wife's tears when he had been taken from her, and she knew that the best affection of her life and the sunniest days of it had gone with him.

But that she should suffer her trial to over-

cloud more than a certain portion of her still young life, so as to unfit her for the enjoyment of other things, she never contemplated. There was no hypocrisy about her; she could not feel acutely, nor suffer keenly; and she made no outward show of a grief unfelt. She had felt it once, she had loved once; now it was over, and life held still much that was pleasant. This she accepted, and went her even way with a face full of all kindness, *almost* sympathy, and with a forehead uncrossed by any care.

Thank God, we are all as wonderfully diverse as we are fearfully and wonderfully made! How poor would our gardens be if all our plants were sensitive plants, and closed at touch of rain, or of hand, if even they were all warmth-loving plants, whose petals should open only to the sunshine! Thank God, we have holly to smile at us through snows and frosts, when tenderer and fairer leaves are laid away for summer.

It was well for Margaret, at least, that she had found a sturdy bright evergreen to lean upon. To another blighted bindweed she might have drawn closer, perhaps, from a deeper sympathy. But bindweed clinging to bindweed is no wholesome attitude for either. They are apt to fall together to the ground.

And in this, as in all things, we can see how fairly, after all, our mercies and our gifts are measured out. For assuredly, in proportion to our capabilities of suffering are our powers of enjoyment. Souls eminently susceptible of the touch of pain are open likewise to the most subtle, and refined, and delicate of pleasures.

So that it were not so bad a thing, perhaps, as it appears at first sight, could we say truthfully with Corinne, "De toutes mes facultés, la plus puissante c'est la faculté de souffrir."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"His ignorance is more charming than all knowledge, and his little sins more bewitching than any virtue."—

EMERSON.

"When will Aunt Margaret come, Miss Phillippine?" asked Charlie one day, as he walked beside his indulgent friend, who had always a hand to give to each of the children.

November was far advanced; the trees were spreading their bare network against the lurid glow of the setting sun, that struggled vainly for his wonted supremacy over the heavens, and was slowly dying in the attempt, looking all the redder and grander even for the grey mantle that surrounded him on every side. A damp, earthy smell rose from the trim pathways at Beauchamp Towers, and mounds of yellow leaves, raked together to be removed the next day, formed the only variety where so lately shrubs and brilliant flowers had lavished their colours and their beauties. Instead of nightingales, a troop of chirruping sparrows wrestled and fluttered in the bare boughs or in the masses of ivy that clothed some decaying tree; and a puffed robin sat forlorn in dark distinctness against the disk

of the sun, opening his beak to give out a melancholy note now and then, and suffering his rosy breast to be colourless and eclipsed by the fiery splendour beyond him.

Philippine did not love the winter, and she had been very silent as she walked through the woods, hardly listening to and not at all disturbed by the children's prattle. The fall of the quiet leaves seemed to be upon her own heart, and a certain sensation, not of pain actually, but of discomfort, of which she hardly knew the cause, came with it.

On a sudden the thought that had made her sad and silent passed before her again. How was it in a certain spot abroad, where crosses and flowers had reared themselves in summer, but where only crosses must be standing now? Were the leaves falling with that slow solemn murmur then? Settling as sadly, as noiselessly, on the green mound where Gaspar Marshall was laid? She had not seen the mound, but how well she could picture it: not in the great churchyard—that was not possible for a heretic—but in a patch of ground hard by. Two other Englishmen and an English infant lay beside him, and a railing enclosed the little spot.

The roses were planted, Margaret had written,—English roses for this English grave. For Philippine had sent some when she reached England, and the chaplain had promised to see them placed and cared for.

“Do not say anything about my having sent them,” wrote poor Philippine; “it might be misinterpreted. And why should he not have English roses beside him, and why not from me?”

And Margaret in the midst of her sorrows had thought enough for Philippine to answer calmly,—

“Why not, indeed? You were his friend, and one of his latest friends; it is very kind in you, Philippine, to send the flowers. He was true to all his friends, and he would have wished to see them happy. So when I hear you are very happy, Philippine, far happier than you are now; when you tell me you have found some one I cannot think unworthy of you, I shall rejoice doubly—for him, and for myself.”

Beside a death-bed, Margaret had determined to close her eyes to a certain tree of knowledge within her reach. Had she looked and tasted, she felt that not she herself, but Philippine would suffer. If we wish to quench a smouldering fire it is not a wise plan to open channels of air upon it, and so fan it into flame. And though Margaret, being very liberal-minded, is not hasty in forming irrevocable decisions, when once she *has* decided, she is not easily turned aside. To take Philippine to her heart as Gaspar's love, as loving Gaspar, would indeed have been sweetest, easiest, and most comforting; and Margaret knew that she had but to say, “Come!” But what was best, and where lay the path of duty, that was Margaret's quest. Philippine was young enough to be saved still, if only a strong hand forbade her acceptance of an offered, a possible sorrow.

“She may live this down, please God!” said Margaret. And so she wrote to Philippine as Gaspar's “friend.”

And to a great extent Margaret's plan of action

was successful. Philippine started at her own thoughts, and paused to ask herself what she had been doing unawares? Perhaps she was deceiving herself, nursing an unreality in her heart. Maybe Gaspar Marshall had never thought of her as anything more than a friend; as Margaret called her so, it was more than probable. She was ashamed of the little fabric she had built, as it seemed, on air. She tried to hide herself from herself. The love of Elaine was far from her! if she was unbeloved, she dared not, could not love.

So when Charlie's clear voice broke in upon her thoughts she was glad of the interruption, and shook herself free from them.

"Aunt Marg'ret?" she replied to his question, "before Christmas, perhaps—if she is well enough, Charlie."

"And will we go away when she comes, Miss Philippine? or will we stay a little teeny bit longer? I hope we won't go back to Fernhill before Christmas comes."

"Why not, Charlie?"

"Because Elspet says Miss Philippine—you, I mean—have nice Christmas stockings for the poor children, and puts nice things in them—presents and things."

"But *you* are not poor children," said Philippine.

"Oh, *amn't* I poor, then? I haven't got nothing but a old penny, and he's got a hole through him—besides, he's so hot."

"*Hot*, Charlie?"

"Oh, I mean," said Charlie, waking up, and

shaking himself, after a plunge in a pile of wet leaves—probably the cause of his sudden return to consciousness—"I mean he *was* hot, but I think he must be cold now. I put him in the fire to look *through* him, don't you see."

"How long ago, Charlie?"

"About a week or a month, I think."

"Then I should fancy he is quite cold," said Philippine. She could not help thinking the process was often had recourse to by the children. She herself was constantly put in a fire of perplexity by their strange questions, and she was quite sure they must then "see through" her.

Far from smooth had been her sailing with her new charges, since their arrival at the Towers. She had never been so ceaselessly employed and never more interested; but treasures are sometimes troublesome in proportion to their worth, and fears for the unguarded speech of Charlie, and for the personal safety of both, while she was responsible for them, kept her continually on the *qui vive*.

Once their stay had very nearly come to a premature end. Mrs. Beauchamp thought it a bad plan, on principle, to pet and spoil children whose future paths must lead them through privation and poverty; and she reminded Philippine continually that she was acting a doubtful part towards these little ones in devoting so much time, and all else at her command, to their amusement. But Philippine was a wilful woman; and the Scotch proverb says, that even a "wilful *man* ma'un ha'e his way." Nevertheless, when Charlie misbehaved himself, or committed some

folly amounting to such in Mrs. Beauchamp's eyes, Philippine could not but tremble for the consequence.

At her request, luncheon for the rest of the party was made the children's dinner, so that at one meal during the day they might be present. Mr. Beauchamp delighted in them and in Charlie's quaint candour, and his wife, in spite of herself, was often betrayed into an amused smile. But with the wonted hour, one unlucky day, no Charlie came to climb into his high chair.

Elspet was summoned. She had brushed his hair and washed his hands, and put on a new pinafore, and he had left the nursery. The butler had not seen him, neither had the footmen, neither had the gardener, nor the coachman. Messengers were sent to all parts, but in vain.

It was a sorry sight indeed. Dolly with tearful eyes was left alone at the large table, from which all the chairs had been pushed aside, for the sole reason, that being fastened there by an immovable bar, she could not have got down to save even her *own* little life. Mr. Beauchamp, without a hat, went about in the garden, wearing his hands in his pockets by way of appearing quite at ease, as if he kept his equanimity in them, and assuring every one the boy was all right, while he continued a would-be careless search over the premises.

A gardener-boy on tiptoe looked into the large fountain, while a housemaid with a white face stood behind him, waiting in terror for his verdict "drowned" or "not drowned," and not daring to face the possibility herself.

Mrs. Beauchamp, with her unfolded napkin in her hand, stood at the window overlooking the terrace, her eye-glass raised, and an occasional "*Very* tiresome! dear me!" escaping her; more (let us do her justice) as a vent for her feelings than from real displeasure.

Philippine did not speak, but went noiselessly from room to room, looking eagerly into each with a hope he might be there, and turning away sick at heart to another door. For the search had continued more than half an hour now, and how the child could be alive, and yet within reach of the long loud calls of "Char-lie! Charlie!" that echoed unheeded through the house and grounds, it was difficult to understand.

Philippine and Elspet met at the bath-room door. It was a favourite resort of Charlie's, where a large window for catching flies, and a bath to sail his boats in, afforded him every advantage in this interesting pursuit, of manning vessels by maiming blue-bottles.

A large marble bath, reached by steps, which was usually kept closed-in by a high railing (just wide enough between the bars to admit a boat and Charlie's hand), occupied the larger part of this room. There were thus two dangers into which the unwary boy might have fallen. Through the window, from the table on which he climbed to fetch his victims, or into the huge bath, fully deep enough to have drowned him twice over.

The meeting at the door, showing that the fears of each were shared by the other, added not a little to the anxiety Philippine and Elspet

were suffering; and there was an instant's pause before either summoned courage to turn the handle of the door.

In moments like these what cannot imagination work! Charlie's face white under the clear water, his black frock floating on either side, the boat, and the maimed flies struggling upon the top, where he had let go his hold, and he lying motionless and beyond help at the bottom—all this and more passed over the mind of Philippine in the instant that she turned the handle, and saw that the window, thank God! was closed.

The momentary relief of finding their fears in that particular quarter groundless, passed away when the doleful "Char-lie! Master Char-lie!" rang again upon their ears, and they returned to the old misery of anxious uncertainty with a sigh. Elspet, who had been loudest at first in declaring that there "wasn't nothin' to be afraid of," and that the boy would appear immediately, now fairly broke down. Seating herself upon the stairs, and covering her face with her hands, she rocked herself to and fro in abject misery.

Little Dolly, released by some merciful passer-by, was screaming loudly in Philippine's arms. The bustle and excitement frightened her even more than her brother's absence, and by way of pacifying her a little, her comforter turned towards the dining-room with the view of administering the first tempting morsel she could find, and distracting her thoughts from the anxious search now being carried on in quite another direction.

There was an ominous silence, indeed, in the

rooms they approached. Doors stood wide open, fires had been forgotten, and were settling down low and red in Mrs. Beauchamp's room and the drawing-rooms. From the dining-room the exemplary pillar-like footmen and butler had disappeared, forgetting even to replace the covers on the dishes. Philippine almost shuddered, as with the sobbing child in her arms she neared the room where first they had missed Charlie, where perhaps Charlie would never be seen again.

A sudden check was put upon her imagination and her fears, though she was not a little startled.

Large as life—the eyes, indeed, larger than she had ever seen them—his hair ruffled upon his forehead, his face very pale and his mouth open, a little figure sat cross-legged under the dining-room table, staring out at Philippine in apparently awe-struck silence. The white cloth and the dark Turkey carpet framed him in, and finished off the unusual picture and position.

“Charlie!” exclaimed Philippine, as soon as she could speak—“what is the matter?”

“I—don’t know,” said Charlie.

“Are you ill?”

“No”—in a very low voice.

“And where have you been then?”

Charlie’s chin began to retire into the neck of his little blouse, and nothing was to be seen of his eyes now, for the shock of falling hair.

In the very lowest of voices, and rubbing his chubby chilblained little forefinger up and down the edge of his boat, Charlie made answer at last,

“Here!”

It was very fortunate for the poor little man that Philippine had patience to listen to his doled-out, piecemeal explanation, and that she was quick enough to guess what she could not get him to explain.

For he was far too bewildered and frightened to give any lucid account of the sad business. He had no clear idea as to how it had come about himself. It was Philippine that divined at length that the game of hiding under the table, begun in sport, had ended in the reality of fright; and that this fright, or rather—for fear is not exactly a thing known to Charlie—the sight of the alarm he had caused to others, and the commotion he had occasioned in the decorous household, had so paralysed and stupified him, that with eyes and mouth open, as Philippine had found him, he had remained (like the boy of tradition who mimicked his neighbour when the wind changed) a painful fixture beneath the table.

After this adventure it was some days before Charlie's spirits rose above zero.

He was heard sobbing quietly to himself beneath the sheets on two several occasions—

“Oh, Aunt Marg'ret, Aunt Marg'ret! I shall die for you, Aunt Marg'ret—and I've quite forgotten the way to be good.”

I think a brain-wave must have carried the sound to Aunt Margaret, as she leant upon her window-sill and watched the Roman moon. That moon was looking into the dark corners of the Coliseum, where the tramp, tramp, of the French sentry alone broke the silence. And it looked

into something else very like a ruin—a white face with dark lines upon it, and very wasted cheeks, that shone out startingly white and deathlike in the silver light.

Even now a party of strangers are on their way to the other ruin, and will disturb the stillness of the place. But on this one, only the moon, God's angels, and God Himself will look to-night.

Which of the three is it that wakes Margaret for the first time into a yearning for her two little stray lambs at home, into a sudden remembrance of the fact that she has been months away from them whom God had entrusted to her?

With a sudden accession of bitterness, and repentance, and shame, Margaret threw herself upon her bed, and, like Peter, wept bitterly. She raised her head for a moment with an unspoken vow upon her lips. She would go home to-morrow, come what may. So might God help her!

And there all night long, not the bright moon only, but from the window she had left open, the chill night winds of Italy, alas! of Rome, played over the sleeping figure of Margaret.

To any one who had watched her there, the contrasts of snow-white face and hands upon the black gown falling round her, the sleep might have seemed one of death.

But the angels knew better.

CHAPTER XXXII.

“Weep no more—O weep no more—
Young buds sleep in the root’s white core.”
KEATS.

But all this—Charlie’s misdemeanour and the consequent alarm at the Towers, and Margaret’s fatal sleep in the poisonous night air of Rome—had occurred fully six weeks before she and Mrs. Armytage watched the orange-gathering from their windows.

Five weeks of Roman fever had since then reduced the thin white Margaret of July and August into a shadow of that shadow. Mr. Beauchamp had called her a shadow at Munich. What could he have called her now?

Only twice had she been lifted from her bed on to the sofa in the window of the little sitting-room. And it was by means of many pillows and much propping alone, that she was able, wearily enough, to watch the sunset, and the capuchin in the garden.

Mrs. Armytage, with pure unselfishness, had wished to tear herself from Rome in order to give the customary change of air to her invalid. But Margaret had expressed both by word and such feeble gesture as she could at present command, so strong a disinclination to be moved at all, that her friend was obliged to give way. And, said the English doctor, it was not, after all, such a risk at the beginning of the cold season as later in the year it would undoubtedly have been. With November, frost had set in, and little Roman school-boys were counting on

the possible day when snow upon the ground should be the signal for a holiday.

"The doctor wishes you to drive to-morrow, my dear," said Mrs. Armytage, as she drew the blind, and rang the bell for Giacomo, cook, butler, and *valet de place*, who with his brown beady eyes and swarthy colouring and hair, and his quick retorts and speaking gestures, brought a breath of freshness into Margaret's monotonous day that made her look for his entrance and exit with a childish pleasure.

"Very well," said Margaret, wondering a little how it would be managed, but far too weak in mind and body to be capable of thinking out anything.

The door opened, and Giacomo, white-aproned and bare-armed, carried in a pair of rickety candles and set them on the table. Mrs. Armytage ordered a carriage for the next day at three.

"Alle tre? Per la Signorina? E bene? E la Signorina? Povera Signorina? Come si——"

A further order put a check on his eloquence; and he bustled out of the room with a shrug and a "Hè!" more expressive than any corresponding word—if such it may be called—in our graver language.

And the next day punctually at three, dinner cooked, dinner served, the bell answered, letters posted, coals carried up, dinner carried away, Giacomo dressed and gone to meet the carriage, was seated upon the box; and only awaiting a signal to be like a lamplighter at Margaret's side, ready to carry her down, to arrange her cushions, and to direct the coachman where to drive.

"My cards! said Mrs. Armytage, as she got into the carriage.

"Hè! qui Madame!" from the box, as Giacomo's brisk little figure twisted itself round facing them, and then adjusted itself again as quickly, as he desired the driver to make for the Porta San Sebastiana and the Via Appia, and replaced the card-case in his pocket.

But they had hardly passed the walls and the great gateway, before the motion of the carriage had become too much for Margaret. Almost at foot's pace they drove slowly home.

Mrs. Armytage and Giacomo thought it was the motion of the carriage. We, having seen like drives before, in which Margaret took her part in the hot white streets of Munich, can believe that sorrowful associations had their part in the weariness and tearfulness which came upon her now.

And then they had driven on a sad way too, where the road is flanked on either side by the monuments of the dead, great and small,—baker, senator, tribune, and hero, lying side by side.

It is not a sorrowful sight to us in robust health; not to the gay cavalcade of English riders who passed the carriage at full gallop on the stunted sward. A little wonderment from most, a sigh from some. Then talk of Pinelli's concert, and last year's "meet" at Cecilia Metella's tomb. That is perhaps all; or, a sceptic who thinks it's all "nonsense, you know—the real tombs are taken away long ago"—and appears learned only to the one or two more ignorant than himself, who laugh at his assertion, thinking it a safe

thing to do; not compromising them at all, whether he speaks in jest or earnest.

But Margaret, whose heart had been in the grave for some months past, who had been so near the grave herself, and whose whole nervous system seemed gone to ruin, wept silently but very bitterly during this first short drive. She could hardly have said why. It seemed to her that she cried chiefly because she had no longer any power to hold her tears.

So Mrs. Armytage did not leave cards anywhere that day; but ten days later, Margaret, with a little colour in her cheeks, took her seat beside her friend with something almost like pleasure in the anticipation of the drive.

They drove in silence for a long while, drinking in the gentle intoxications of that enchanted air. Past the great fountain in the Piazza di Spagna, past the indolent beautiful groups of models on the steps, past Pialet's, where Englishmen began to loiter, through the Via Babuino, up to the sentinel churches at either end of that street and the Corso, twin guardians of the two large thoroughfares of Rome.

Here they swept into the great "place of the people," worthy of "a people" indeed, with its great obelisk towering to the blue sky; an obelisk by whom Romulus is but of yesterday; an obelisk that it is said was a *memory* to the chosen people, when they went out laden with the Egyptian spoils.

There it stands, pointing with eternal finger to the throne of God, helping the finite in us, if but for a moment, to grasp Infinity—and to believe.

Rome had heretofore been a day-dream with Margaret. From this day forward, spite of her weakness and dejection, despite her sorrows and her comparative lonesomeness and friendlessness among strangers, the place took possession of her senses, of her passions, of her imagination, and of her heart.

The whole poetry of her nature, and her fine sensitiveness and susceptibility of beauty in every form, were satisfied. It seemed to her that for the first time she understood fully how the spirit can be said to "drink in" pleasure. Such beautiful, intangible, refined pleasure too: how can it do otherwise than elevate?

Margaret lay back on her pillows and allowed the first conscious return of peace and pleasure to steal over her. And Mrs. Armytage, with her lap full of English letters, was too engrossed to disturb her happy reveries. It would not last long, poor Margaret! Sorrow would come back with its old sting; and the memory of the children from whom she had so long been separated would bring the old choking to her throat. And again and again she would lift up the thin blue-veined hand, only to prove how weak it was, and what a poor thing the strongest will appears while encased in the bonds and barriers of the most wasted body. What was the use of *willing* to go home, of all her longings for the children, of all her resolves to lift herself up from the depths of grief she now felt she had too long suffered herself to remain in, of all her determinations to take up with God's help the work she had cast aside, and to try and live again for God—for others?

At present, none. The little hand lying on her black dress, sent forth like Noah's dove on its short voyage of discovery, had returned heavily and feebly to its resting-place. Not quite yet, Margaret. The flood is ebbing, the mists are rising; soon, very soon, the dry land will appear. But for the present, like the dove, lie quiet. The olive-leaf for your gathering is not a great way off.

Some one talks of "the happiness of an accepted sorrow." At times—though still rarely—Margaret could have believed in such a thing.

Now, as they drove through the Porta del Popolo, past the exiled foreign churches, that little bed of heresy not to be tolerated within the walls, or beneath the Papal eye—Margaret had calmly rehearsed the drama of the eventful months past by. She had in fancy watched beside what had been so nearly her own deathbed, fearing to linger by that one whose reality and whose torments no fancy could have exceeded. And not for the first time it came across her with a sort of wonder and awe—how marvellously had her path been laid out for her! That Gaspar should go had been God's will. Somewhere in His eternal purpose the wherefore must be written. But how had it been tempered to her? The children cared for at home by the one woman she could have chosen for the charge. That woman and her father removed at the very moment when the awfulness of death—and Gaspar's death—seemed to demand the going out of all men from before them—they two and God only—none other between them and Him. Then, when

he had gone from her, and she needed in her bitter desolation, not comfort, for she was past that, but that "touch of a hand that is warm," the accidental appearance, as it seemed, of another friend whose very character made her, in this case, the most fitting of nurses, because she was not the most tender or feeling of women.

"Have you ever thought," said Mrs. Armytage, folding up her letters at last as the carriage freed itself of the town and swept out into the open country, "how strange it was, Margaret, that I should have been able to come to you at Munich just as you were left alone?"

"I was thinking of it now," said Margaret, turning her heavy eyes with a smile about her lips to her friend.

"How curious! I am certain there is some connection between people's thoughts that has not been explained. I have a friend now who would have a theory about it—he has theories for everything. He would give me an explanation quite satisfactory enough for me. He was coming to Rome this winter, by-the-bye. Let us look for his name at Piale's as we go home."

So they looked.

"Palgrave, Pearson, Pierce, Pratt," read Mrs. Armytage, following the long column of arrivals with her finger.

"But no Poole," she said, closing the book, and giving it back to Giacomo, who ran with it into the shop, and bounded like a lamplighter to his seat on the box again.

"Stop!" she said, as the coachman turned the horses' heads homewards, "Are you tired, dear?"

No—very well. Then—drive to Tadolini's studio. I will get out for a minute and look at his St. Michael. You won't mind waiting three minutes, I know."

"Via Babuino! Hè!" said Giacomo, pulling up his rug with a jerk, and they drove off, Mrs. Armytage telling the story of her journey abroad, of her meeting with the Beauchamps at Innsbruck, who, in the course of conversation had mentioned their stay at Munich.

"'You did not meet a Mr. and Miss Marshall there?' I said to them," Mrs. Armytage went on. "Upon which they told me everything. I went on to Munich at once, my dear. And, humanly speaking, you would not be alive if I had not. Poor man! did you see that blind man, Margaret? And quite young, too!"

But Margaret had not seen him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever ;

Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'erdarkened ways
Made for our searching."—

KEATS.

Mrs. Armytage got out of her carriage at the door of Signor Tadolini's studio, and in the carriage she left her still helpless patient.

Five minutes, and five minutes more passed;

but Margaret did not feel impatient. The soft, balmy air of Italy was playing on her face, and the subtle spells of Rome's enchantment were weaving themselves more closely over their victim.

Who can be tired of waiting in a Roman street?

Look yonder—there is a broken arch. Look through it; you will see a dark court, and in the dark court a sparkling fountain is leaping to the sunlight. There are rainbows in its showers—blue, purple, yellow, red. Ah! but here come colours that put the rainbow all to shame. A Roman woman in her beautiful fanciful dress—the broad apron striped with blue and gold, the scarlet head-dress folded on her raven hair, the short petticoat showing the comely feet. She brings her pitcher to the water, and stands there a very Rachel or Rebecca, in the sun. She loves the sun: she will not stay in that dark court when he has hidden his face from it; she will go out rather on the bare warm steps of the Piazza di Spagna.

Now she is playing at catch-who-can with the fountain for the sunbeams. He is so enamoured of both, he knows not which to choose. Now he is shivering through the silver spray with a flash of golden glory; now he is playing along the dark features of the Roman woman, and bringing out its chiselled contour in full relief against the moss-grown time-worn wall.

And while we are looking at her, what are we overlooking beyond? What is that broken fragment at her feet? A hand as beautiful as hers, perhaps, carved in the days when to be a

Roman matron was a glory and a crown. We cannot help a lingering—prejudice, shall we say? that it is a glory even now. This hand belongs to that statue leaning forward on its uneven pedestal; the other is pressed against her bosom, veiled with its delicate marble drapery. An aloe is springing up through a crevice at her feet, and rude hands have chipped away the brodered hem of her garment. Then the ludicrous comes in upon our sentimentality. It strikes us on a sudden that she is looking for her poor lost hand. And we turn away, for “Fiori! belli fiori! do you speak English, madam?” in a strong foreign accent, is ringing in our ears. And a faint, sweet smell comes fanning over the carriage; and blush camellias and purple violets are leaning their beautiful faces into ours. And who can resist them—who?

Oh! to think of English people shivering round the fires at home, and of the English fogs that must be wrapping up our island! And here we are basking in sunshine, revelling in flowers, intoxicated with the purest and most intense of God’s good treasures. We shall be very glad to get home. We are not bitten by any wandering-mania; we are all home lovers, and have known home-sickness. But for the present—well, we are in Rome, and thank God for it!

Margaret bought a bunch of violets, with an inward smiting of conscience at the extravagance—a few centissimi. It was not much, and she gave way to the temptation.

As she lifted them to her face, and closed her eyes, as people have a way of doing, when they

want to enjoy intensely their other sense of smell, the door into which Mrs. Armytage had entered opened. Margaret's eyes opened too.

Two gentlemen came out, one leaning on the arm of the other. They were about the same height, and English unmistakably. One was probably some six or eight years older than the other, and it was he who leaned upon his friend's arm, or rather held it, with a sort of nervous, childlike hold. He was the farthest off from Margaret as they passed her, and she could not see his face. The other stopped suddenly and involuntarily after he had gone a few steps, and looked into the carriage. He paused a moment hesitating; then, as if shocked at his presumption in thus scanning the face of what might be a stranger, and certainly was a lady, he walked on again quickly.

"I thought it was some one I knew," said he to his friend, as they turned through one of the little by-streets into the Corso; "but it wasn't. An extraordinary likeness though: a sort of ghost of the original. You remember that beautiful woman I told you about, whom I met going to Munich? Well, I thought it was her. Here is a shop that will do. It is rather far to go up to Spithövers—don't you think so? Now shall I choose you one of those photographs for your mother?"

And they went into the shop, the speaker loosening his arm, and going towards the counter, while the elder of the two remained standing at the doorway as his friend had left him.

Margaret had seen the face that looked into

the carriage, and knew that she had seen it before. But her memory had been severely taxed of late, and the fever alone had weakened it considerably. All the way home and for many hours afterwards she puzzled herself as to who it was, and where she had seen him before. Occasionally the face crossed her mind's eye during the next few days. But when she could not recall a single association which helped her to identify it, she laid it aside without much further thought. Gaspar was dead, and "all men else were shadows."

In the mean time old friends of Mrs. Armytage dropped in in increasing numbers. Christmas was drawing near, and Rome was filling. Everything was to be seen, but no one knew when or where. Everyone came to everybody else to ask questions or to give information. Everyone is good-natured in Rome. People who would go off alone morosely in their closed broughams to see sights in London, drive briskly about in open carriages and stop at their friends' houses with an offer of "two empty seats." No one is busy, no one thinks of refusing. What are we in Rome for, if not to make holiday?

We put our bonnets on and run down breathless to the carriage. There is no time to be lost; we are going to see something. It does not the least matter what. After a time, as we drive on, perhaps by chance we ask that unimportant question.

A review of the Papal troops, perhaps, in the Borghese Gardens. Our carriage is blocked in the Piazza del Popolo. We sit there for two

hours, while one by one the cargoes of impatient or phlegmatic humanity are told off to pass through the gate.

Arrived at our destination, we find we must walk a considerable way. We see a mass of moving colour in the distance. It moves very fast, indeed, ominously fast. As we join the spectators we see a similar movement amongst them. The last company of Zouaves is passing. The review is over.

But no one is put out; we have glorious sunshine, grass to walk upon, faces as kind and tempers as equable as our own, all round.

We buy bunches of white hyacinths and drive to the Coliseum for maiden-hair ferns. When we go home we arrange them. Our rooms are sweet as a May day, till sunset; then we come in from the balcony and shut the windows, for like a damp mantle the skies are showering their dews.

Now our Giacomos bring the lights, and we close in, to read or dream, or to make plans for to-morrow.

But with the light comes a note, and with the note a bouquet. We have not heard, perhaps, that there is a "meet" to-morrow at the Osteria del Curato? Nor that Monsignor Capel preaches at Santa Maria at the end of the Babuino? Nor that the galleries of sculpture in the Vatican are to be lighted up in the evening? Nor that the band has begun playing on the Pincian in the afternoon?

We had known none of these things. For in the days of the Papal Government no authorised

announcements were published of the most important impending events. A written half-sheet in a bookseller's window was the only assistance offered to the public. And this was as likely to be wrong as any information we had ourselves gathered.

We go out to hear a mass and find there is none. We see a crowd, and ask what it is.

Some one who by happy or unhappy chance has been sucked into the vortex and has seen the border of a vestment between people's heads, or heard the Pope's voice in a Latin prayer, pushes up to the carriage and exclaims, "Not seen it? why then you have missed quite the best thing in Rome!"

We shall say just the same thing to him when we have been to that meet at the Osteria that he knows nothing about.

But we cannot in our hearts believe that any of its passing shows are the "best things" in Rome. They gratify the eye, and indulge our curiosity; they teach us divers lessons in very diverse ways. But the best things of Rome are neither gay nor variable. Speechless, they have been teaching for a thousand years; cold, they bring thoughts of flame to every heart that is worthy of the name; grey, hoary, ruinous, they yet preserve an undying youth; and dead, they blossom continually into freshest life; old stones bringing forth tenderest fern-leaves; old fissures, harbouring delicate flower-bearing weeds. Why called "weeds," except that God and not man has sown them there?

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"A shadow flits before me."
MAUD.

After this hardly a day passed but Margaret was able to be helped into the carriage; and hardly any such drive was taken but the two friends came across or caught a glimpse of the Jonathan and David of Tadolini's studio.

Margaret knew now where she had first met the younger. As one day he had issued suddenly from a flower-shop in the Condotti, he had glanced at the carriage again, and association of Munich and of misery had recalled him to Margaret's mind as her sympathetic companion of a few hours, so many months since. She bowed hesitatingly, for she could not pass him as a complete stranger: but his returned greeting was so evidently that of politeness, of bewilderment, and non-recognition, that she did not again attempt it. At any rate, there was no chance of any renewal of their brief acquaintance, though the Coliseum, the Baths of Caracalla, and a hundred other places would harbour them at once. And Margaret, looking at her drawn face and startingly large eyes in the glass, could not wonder that little of her old self remained for the young Englishman to recognise.

The constant repetitions of these meetings, or rather passings, began to be quite a subject for amusement to Mrs. Armytage. "Our Jonathan and David," she would call them, as she speculated very innocently as to who they were, why

they were so constantly together, and how long they were destined, like weary comets, to cross and recross each other's path.

"I want to know them, Margaret," she would say impatiently. "I should like to come to some explanation and divide the place, giving them so many square miles to sight-see upon, on condition, that they do not dodge us, or we them, any more."

"'Half-Rome' and 'the other Half-Rome,' like the Ring and the Book," said Margaret, smiling. She did not feel that she cared to see any one now, still less to make fresh acquaintances. And yet she seldom failed to look up when the sunny young face passed by them, with its shadow always beyond it—that graver, sadder face, always still and pale, upon which some great sorrow or sickness had so plainly laid its hand.

It certainly was curious, the manner in which the two men (such contrasts to each other) led, as it were, one life, and had between them but one opinion. That is, to the outward eye. For if one turned aside to see a pillar or a fountain or a ruin, the other never dissenting went likewise.

Once, driving on a Saturday afternoon through the Borghese Gardens, Mrs. Armytage and Margaret passed them at a little distance. The carriage-drive is wide and sweeping, but fifty yards or so from it there is a foot-path, grassy, and under trees. This path the two friends were treading together. The younger, evidently amused at the reappearance of the inevitable carriage, looked up as usual, but with a smile—even at

that distance visible to Margaret—and said something to his friend. But the elder man, looking always straight before him, and always holding to his friend's arm, neither turned his eyes nor smiled.

"I sometimes think he is blind," said Margaret one day.

"Impossible, my dear," replied her friend. "The first time I saw him, you know, was in Tadolini's studio, looking at the St. Michael."

"Ah, so it was," said Margaret, with something of inward relief.

It was quite apparent to Margaret, about this time, that however much Mrs. Armytage might talk about Jonathan and David, something else, that would neither be dislodged nor yet be still, lay very heavily at her heart. Perhaps heavily is too strong a word: for Mrs. Armytage was (at times) more restless than really oppressed by her unspoken burden. Her silence about her brother Margaret felt to be ominous. She was not sure whether the idea of his love for her was not distasteful to his sister. She could not quite believe it was; and yet, if not, why this silence? Margaret felt she had left Luke Carew a loop-hole for hope. Suppose he had nourished the tiny seedling till it had burst out into a vigorous shoot, and suppose he should claim her imperatively when she went back to England, accuse her out of her own mouth, as having deceived him and allured him on by a deceitful beacon?

No! She cast away the idea with scorn. If he still cared, could he not have come to her?

What was sea or distance to real love? And what sort of love could it be that sat quiet at home, when hope had not been utterly extinguished? And Margaret did not deny to herself, though it sometimes gave her a remorseful pain, that Luke Carew had been left a little—perhaps hardly perceptible—margin for hope.

Sometimes, I say. For at other times Margaret looking out upon the world in her lonesome, seeing how cold it was, how careless of her griefs, could not help turning with a reaction of almost pleasure to the thought of one heart that had been true to her for so long. One who she knew even now was making her griefs his griefs, and who perhaps refrained from coming to ask for his reward only because he feared to trouble her in her sorrows with the subject, to him so all-important, of his own woe or weal.

Some one has drawn a good distinction between the satisfying of the fancy and imagination, and the satisfying of the heart. Luke Carew might perhaps satisfy Margaret's fancy; whether he could satisfy her heart remains as yet an open question. With her it remained so too, when she thought of it at all.

But the subject uppermost in her heart now was that of her return home. Day after day she discussed it with her friend, removing obstacles and urging reasons. But the stern fact remained, that she could not yet get across the room without an arm, that her limbs moved still quite independently of her will, even then, and that travelling alone was impossible.

And then there was a second fact, as stern as

the first. No escort was to be found for any one returning to England; all England was flooding out to Rome. Far less could an escort be found to act sick-nurse to so fragile a traveller as Margaret.

"My dear," Mrs. Armytage would say to her impatiently, "you must advertise for a Sister of Charity, not inquire for an escort. Unless Jonathan and David will undertake you, and give you your tonic every two hours between this and Marseilles."

But David and Jonathan were not thinking of going home. Christmas was at the door, and who will leave Rome before him? Not many days after Margaret's last struggle about going back to England, the two friends had been introduced to Mrs. Armytage by *her* friend, the Mr. Poole whose name she had looked for in Piale's book of visitors.

"And they are coming in to five o'clock tea to-night, my dear," she said to Margaret on her return, while she filled a little brown bowl full of violets and put them beside her.

"Where did you meet them?" said Margaret.

"In the Corsini, looking at the pictures."

That afternoon, strangely enough, from an old book lying on Margaret's lap, some loose papers fluttered off on to the floor.

There was a dried leaf given her at Munich by Philippine. A sketch of the street done from Gaspar's window on a half-sheet of writing paper, and a card. On the card was printed, "Mr. Williams."

Where had it come from? Perhaps from Fern-

hill. No; for the old rector's card was large and square, and printed in mediæval letters. Gradually it came back to Margaret, as through a mist, that when the Englishman who had been her companion in the Munich train had left her, he had put a card into her hand. It was creased now and doubled, as she had held it on that weary drive (that seemed an eternity to her) between the station and the Hôtel Sophien-bad. No wonder that she had never looked at it, till it fell out crushed and soiled at her feet to-day in Rome.

Could he, then, be any relation of Ellen Williams? She would ask him that afternoon.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"And I would be the girdle,
Around her dainty dainty waist."
TENNYSON.

All England, we have said, was flooding out to Rome. Mrs. Pickering wished to do as all England did. She had been barely three months home from the Continent, when she determined to set forth once more. London was very dull and very unsociable, she thought: it was also very cold and murky. People only kept themselves warm by regular exercise, and to regular exercise Mrs. Pickering was averse. Nature had, in fact, debarred her from it, though this she would not acknowledge. But Mr. Pickering gaily acknowledged it for her.

"You don't run about enough, my dear woman, Mrs. P." said he, smudging fierce and fast at his easel, and bringing such effects out of his smudges as would have silenced any one but Mrs. Pickering—a glorious wave falling to pieces in a cloud of spray, a herring-boat brown-sailed, a boulder of rugged rock and three unerring daubs to produce it all. But he appeared to heed his effects as little as his wife. "You should take a good run, now, down the street, clapping your hands and thumping your arms like a cabby. Eh? shocked, old gal? Well, to be sure I had forgotten your diameter, so forgive the suggestion." And he playfully inserted the end of his coarse brush and one finger into Mrs. Pickering's waistband.

"Now don't be a fool, Pickering," she cried angrily, twisting round, upon which the distended band snapped suddenly and gave way. "One would think for to see your airs and manners, that you had remained with them select parties in the steerage, since last summer." And with a withering glance behind her Mrs. Pickering sailed indignantly from the room, closing the door upon her faded merino gown, and opening it again angrily. Her band had fallen to the ground, and she turned to recover it. But no sooner had she shown her portly back to her husband than he had stooped and whisked the missing article of dress into his pocket. He was now painting away unconsciously as ever; lifting his eye-glasses by means of his nose, and frowning at the same time with his bushy brows: wearing a look of interest in and attention to his picture

which Mrs. Pickering ought to have known was not quite natural.

Mrs. Pickering was too proud to ask for what she had lost. She knew that, though she had barely suggested Rome, her battle was won. She forthwith called Pamela, ordered her brougham, and set forth to buy a pink brocaded satin for the Roman season.

In the meantime, Joshua Pickering, the very image of a coarse and jovial Bacchus, stood green-garlanded before his easel. He had woven his wife's girdle round his head with suppressed guffaws of childish laughter, and now he sang lustily and loud, in a voice that was not musical and yet had music in it, the famous old ditty of Edmund Waller:—

“That which her slender waist confined
Shall now my joyful temples bind;
No monarch but would give his crown
His arms might do what this has done,”

Louder and louder waxed Mr. Pickering's song, and inspiration came to his assistance; by the time he had reached the third verse it ran thus:—

“A narrow compass; and yet there
Dwells what would fill a half-mile square;
Yet size is no drawback nor bound,
She'd travel where the sun goes round.

Poor me! my heaven's extremest sphere.
Is just to stay in comfort here;

But this blest ribbon holds a wife
Would lead the very d—l a life!

Just now with finger slyly poked,
And all the powers of good evoked,
I thought, 'If but this little bound
Were burst, she'd spill upon the ground!

Then, by the stars! for the first time
I'd spoon her (up) like goodly wine
And bottled once and stowed away,
Why Joshua P. should rule the day.'

But no! instead of joy for me,
I make this sad discovery,
The ribbon that is bright for her
Imprisons two——"

"Good morning, sir!"

Mr. Pickering waved his painting rag joyfully round his head and stretched out his hand to an amateur artist who at that moment entered.

After some familiar conversation, and a good deal of bantering on the part of the host, his visitor said,—

"I came especially to speak to you touching that fine little bit you lent me, Pickering. What do you think it's worth, eh? I'm down with it, whatever you say. There's a lurking fire of genius in the thing that takes me amazingly. Brotherton, you know, the R. A. (not the young fellow), came across it among my daubs and took it for mine, and——"

"Ah! you sly dog!" broke in Joshua Pickering,

"you think you'll make it so, eh? for a few shillings? and pass it off as your own?" and he gave his accustomed bellow of laughter, while the brush he did not think it worth while to withdraw made an irregular smear across the canvas, which with another touch was deftly transformed into a broken stump driven into the shimmering sand from which his glorious wave had just receded.

"Who was the artist, did you say, Pickering?" inquired his friend.

"Lady—young—beautiful—" Mr. Pickering had his mouth full of brushes, and so left out all superfluous words.

"A lady! oh, indeed! and young!—dear me! Well, it's uncommonly good. But of course a young lady is rather in one's hands, I mean in the customer's hands, you know, and must take what she can——"

"*Quite* in your hands, my dear friend," said Joshua, taking the brushes from his mouth and turning his sharp brown eyes on his visitor with a look that was so grave, it became—for him—almost stern. "*Quite* in your hands, my dear sir—so hit her hard—she's got no friends." And he replaced the brushes and went on painting.

"But—do you mean she's badly off and earning her living?"

"I do," replied Joshua after a pause. "Just as *I* was, twenty years ago—just as I may be, twenty years hence—when the rheumatics play their tunes along these digits, and Joshua P.'s pictures and himself are laid by together on the shelf.

Just as you might be, Mr. Amateur Artist, sir if you'll excuse me saying so, if your bank broke to-morrow, as her father's broke, long ago—when she was a chicken."

"Well, mention any sum you think right, Pickering—and here's a blank cheque. I'm your man."

Joshua paused a moment again and looked side-ways at his picture. Then he said,

"The sum, sir, that I shall mention, remember, will be what I consider the *market* value of the article. I do not mention to a *gentleman*, the sum I think he might well give as an offering at the shrine of Art, sir—nor to the higher shrine of virtuous beauty. The sum I shall mention, sir, is twenty guineas. The artist is unknown, sir, AND"—Mr. Pickering paused—"very poor."

The visitor produced his purse and asking for a pen, filled up the blank cheque at his host's request, as follows—

"Pay Margaret Marshall or order the sum of——" the pen hesitated an instant.

"Be a man and a Christian," said Joshua, laying his big hand on the narrow back bent over the table. "You'll find it after many days, Mr. Barley."

"Forty pounds," wrote the hand now, fluently and without hesitation.

Joshua's hand was raised, but only to fall with renewed power on Mr. Barley's shoulder.

"God bless you, my good sir," said he. "You could not have done me a greater kindness."

When he was gone Joshua Pickering thus soliloquised—

“My eyes!—well, if that isn’t a windfall for the sweet woman, I’m much mistaken. Poor dear, poor dear! she needs all the comfort she can get. And she’s ill in Rome, too, Carew says—getting better, eh? Well, my poor dear, here’s forty pounds sterling for you, and no mistake—none of your dirty charities, poor dear—none of your subscriptions for the indigent poor. My eyes, Joshua P., how you hate that word ‘indigent!’ It’s more of scorn in it than pity, I’ll take m’oath—but it’s none of these—bread fairly won if ever bread was—and it’s awful odds a woman like her has to deal with, I’ll be bound. I’m mistaken if Barley’s back didn’t expand a bit after he unburdened himself of that chink; it lifts a chap up to do a good turn to another. She’ll be grateful, poor soul; but Barley, you ought to be the grateful one! I’m your doctor, I’ve given you the emetic—you’ve disgorged, and you’re a ‘wiser and a poorer man,’ not a ‘sadder’ man, I’ll reckon.

“Well, and, to be sure, *she’s* at Rome. Won’t mention that, in case Mrs. Pickering should object. Reconciles a chap to going to foreign parts, it does, to think of seeing a sweet woman like that. By Jove! when a woman’s a woman it makes even Joshua P. more of a man.

“Ah! she’ll be married to that Carew before long. Well, he’s a good fellow, and he’s a wretch in love, as he should be, and no mistake. And we can’t expect she’ll find her match anywhere; so God bless the match! say I, Joshua Pickering, who’s been matched easier, and long ago.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"She spake such good thoughts natural."
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

It is wonderful how quickly an intimacy will spring up where tastes and objects of interest are in common. It is especially wonderful at Rome, where people who have passed each other as strangers for weeks or months find themselves by the talisman of a magic introduction suddenly grown into old friends all at once.

Rome, of course, offers every advantage to such rapidly formed friendships. In England sky, circumstance, disposition, alike keep us at a cautious distance from each other; but in Rome, where every day we make holiday, and feast ourselves greedily on eye-satisfying, soul-stirring sights, we are driven from our separate citadels, and drawn to each other by a new sense of keen sympathy and delight. For surely enjoyment throws out of self, if anything can. Few of us care to be alone in that which increases ever in its dispersion.

"Je ne sais si je me trompe," says Corinne, "mais il me semble qu'on se devient plus cher l'une à l'autre en admirant ensemble les monuments qui parlent à l'âme par une véritable grandeur."

It was so with the little party of four, who by Mr. Poole's intervention had, at last, been brought together in Mrs. Armytage's rooms. One afternoon they had been strangers, the next they were acquaintances, the day after (chiefly spent together) they felt the acquaintance was warming

into friendship. In a week's time they had almost ceased to have separate plans. A consultation one afternoon determined the affairs of the next day for both.

Mr. Poole sometimes, but rarely, joined the quartett. Five was not so convenient a number for sight-seeing as four, and he had many friends and separate interests.

There was nothing light, or volatile, or whimsical about this sudden friendship, as from experience we might imagine. So sober an element pervaded the little group that perhaps to strangers they appeared impervious to enjoyment, and indifferent. Mrs. Armytage alone had animal spirits, and with these grave faces around her even she became serious and dignified.

Then the relations between them, and the circumstances of each, were conducive to this calm, passionless friendship. Mr. Williams and Margaret were more like saint and worshipper than lovers, or even friends. They usually fell naturally into each other's company, and he picked up the pearls that dropped from her lips with a reverence that was nearly awe. When she looked at leaves or flowers by the way-side in their country drives, and her eyes filled with a sort of quiet sunshine at the sight, he would stop the driver, get out, and lay them in her lap in silence. "Are they what you like?" he would perhaps say, and a quiet "Yes, thank you—how beautiful!" was reward enough for him. When they were alone for an instant he poured out his sorrows to her, asked her counsel, told his difficulties, and treasured her answers in his heart.

Younger than Margaret by three years, it never occurred to him that he might aspire to anything above the footstool of his saint.

The second day of their acquaintance discovered to Margaret the fact that this was none other than Ellen Williams's prodigal brother. With some hesitation, he confessed the fact, imploring Margaret at the same time to keep it an entire secret. Go home, he said, he could not. He had tried it—God knew he had tried it! But every feeling that was inhuman and unfilial had come into his heart, and he felt if he were ever to come to the knowledge of all that is high and holy he must see it before him in some shape on earth.

Margaret, anxious to bring about a reconciliation, which it seemed to her that God had certainly intended her to do, bringing her as a link between the home (such as it was) and the homeless, argued the point again and again.

"You don't know my feeling," he once said earnestly. "I am driven of the wind and tossed. My anchor has been rudely torn from under me. I have been in an atmosphere of unbelief for two years at college. I have no influence to lead me the other way. God knows how miserable I am."

"Thank God you are miserable still," said Margaret gravely.

"What do you mean?" he asked wondering.

"If you were not," she said, "I think your case would be infinitely more hopeless than it is. Do you know I was afraid——"

"Of what?" he inquired.

"That you were happier—that you were getting

reconciled; and yet I knew it was not the happiness I want you to have—that I know you will have still.”

“Listen!” he said. They were sitting on a seat in the gardens of the villa Doria, waiting for the other two, who had gone into the house, for Margaret had still little use of her limbs, and could only, with the help of an arm, totter to the nearest resting-place when they left the carriage. “Listen! You do not close your eyes to the phases through which another mind can pass—you do not think that doubt itself is damnable—you do not shut against me all hope of coming to belief, by spitting righteous scorn upon me when I show you that foul thing—myself. And yet, by Heaven! if ever woman——” He stopped here, as he always did when anything like a compliment was near the surface.

“You will forgive my saying so,” said Margaret; “but do you know it seems to me that doubt is a disease.”

“It is infectious, at all events,” he replied, smiling sadly.

“And yet we cannot lay down a rule,” she continued, “for some people go into it open-eyed, and hold it with a method and a *faith*, if I may say so, that is quite unlike madness.”

“Certain lines lead to it inevitably,” he answered. “I have got on one of those tracks; yet I cannot say on what track—I cannot say what I believe, or why I disbelieve. I disbelieve in everything, and yet when I analyse my mind I can find no reason why—no grounds from which I started.”

“You have caught the infection,” she said.

"You have not walked into it willingly. You are only disturbed by seeing others walking in before you. And you know there is a great deal that is attractive about an unbeliever."

He looked up in astonishment.

"I mean about his course," said Margaret. "All our minds are astir to-day. We are all sifting the old sands, digging in the old paths, and trying to make discoveries. Most of us are content with this, because if we find a tiny flaw here, we turn up as often, and oftener, a hidden jewel. But then a man comes who has been led up in the old ways—by the old paths, and he shakes all these from him valiantly, and he says, '*What has been* need not be always. Away, old fashions and old beliefs! We shall find truth by another path.' But it is curious," she went on, "how astray people go, when once they start for themselves. You would think that by a thousand different paths men *must* finally arrive at God, the final good; men, I mean, who are looking for truth, and purity, and light. But it seems to me they lose themselves in a wilderness, and go in circles, round themselves. Do you understand my meaning?"

"Oh yes," he said.

"I wish I could express myself better, but I think you will extract what I want to say from my tangled words. It seems to me that having revolved for a certain time in this wilderness, coming always upon the same path, the same stumbling-blocks, and the same barriers, they decide that as *they* cannot leave the wilderness, there can be nothing beyond it. If there were

a way out, why should not *they* discover it who have pursued their search so long, and with such fidelity?

"Now another man is standing in the thicket too. He sees men wearily going round and round him, coming to nothing higher or better, and yet with every round becoming more loud in their protestations, more firm in their convictions that anything beyond the thicket is an idle dream. 'Start as we may,' they say, 'we come upon the same goal. Is not this conclusive? It pleases you triflers to imagine that there is another path—that there is another truth. But, if so, give us proof. We, at least, are honest; we are ready to be convinced. Only convince us.'

"And here," said Margaret, sighing, for she had tired herself out in her earnestness, "comes the sad part."

"How?" inquired her companion.

"Because he *cannot* convince them," she replied.

They were both silent—he waiting to hear what she would say next, and she lost in thought. After a moment she said again,—

"He *cannot* convince them. They, with their eyes fixed on their weary rounds, he with his whole mind and sight riveted to another path, how should they *ever* meet and agree? Their courses are perfectly opposed. For above the thicket there is a heaven; and to the one it is indeed heaven. To his soul the path to it is as apparent as the weary rounds to the other. 'They have neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard.' Once seeing that path, neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to

come can hide it. Overclouded it may be, but banished or hidden quite—never. But I have wandered from my point,” said she, smiling. “All I wanted to say was, that it is an inner consciousness which makes believers, and not any outward evidences alone. These, I am sure, when the consciousness is present, are so many buttresses to faith: in the new light we read all things anew. But I lose all hope of ever convincing any one of God’s truth and love by appealing *only* to reason and the intellect. We must need the knowledge with our *hearts*, read it from our *hearts*, hold it by our *hearts*; and then our hearts convince us as nothing else can. After that, as I said before, nature, our lives, our experience, everything is read newly, in what Mrs. Browning calls the ‘great Godlight.’”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Three weeks passed over the heads of the English quartett with whom we have lately had alone to deal. Three weeks had cemented the friendship between them, though to the eye of a stranger no change would have been apparent. They were no children, as we have said before; no young enthusiastic creatures in the heyday of life and existence to be carried away by imaginary romances or transcendental visions. As they had met, so would they, to all appearance,

part. And yet parting was not a thing they liked to speak of.

Margaret, perhaps, was the only one who seriously contemplated it as close at hand. She had regained her strength as far as it was likely that she could regain it for many long days to come. White and wan as her face was still, it wore a look that had been a stranger to it since the first days of Gaspar's illness. Liveliness it could not be called, but life it really seemed to be.

"I am coming home by Civita Vecchia and Marseilles next Thursday," she wrote to Philippine, when the happy three weeks of returning health and congenial spirits had passed by. "I think life has come back to me after all; though lately the spilt hour-glass seemed slipping through my fingers, and I could not care to stop the sands at all. I fear it made me selfish and thoughtless, dear Philippine, leaving my troublesome little pair on your hands. But it shall not be so any longer; I can walk now almost steadily, at least by holding on here and there to a chair or table, and on Saturday please let me find my children at Fernhill. Ah! if you could come with them—but that could not be—there is not a corner fit for you in the house."

"Why not," said ardent Philippine, "if it is fit for her?" But she thoughtfully made no preparations for taking the children herself to Fernhill. By the time the letter reached the Towers, Margaret must have been on the eve of starting for England. Dolly, Charlie, and Philippine were thrown into a state of wild excitement. Elspet, who had bloomed into a fat, comely, and matron-

ly-looking woman on the good fare the Beauchamps' hospitality had provided for her, and on the easy mind she had lately carried in her breast, was very little less excited. She had not had an altogether easy part to play during her visit, but she had a marvellous way of jumping over difficulties and of taking the bull by the horns. If a lie had to be told, Elspet was not the person to shrink from it. Her mistress's honour, or family, or position were equally dear to her heart, and when truth would (in her eyes) have endangered the one or the other, she unhesitatingly put truth aside. She had turned, washed, and ironed certain old scraps of ribbon that had laid by her for many years; and decked (for the honour of the family) in a smart cap adorned with the same, she sat within the sacred precincts of "the room," *vis-à-vis* to the pompous butler and housekeeper, and held her own unabashed and fearless.

"O, no, Mrs. Jamieson," she would say, sipping her tea as elegantly as if she had always been used to Dresden china, and only thought this stoneware service very neat and unobjectionable, "Oh, no, we won't be long residing at Fernhill. The house as we had taken is so much run after that I dare say my mistress couldn't *get it* for more than a short time. And it don't suit us *quite* convenient on the whole; we hasn't quite large enough sitting-rooms to suit my lady, she's been used to such *different* ways, you see, Mrs. Jamieson. Is this four-and-six the pound? Oh, I thought so. I thought I knew it; it must be about that. One don't get it good at three-and-sixpence now."

I think Margaret would have turned Elspet out of the house if she could have overheard some of her fabrications, but happily Margaret did not hear.

She was not a little troubled at this very time, for in her weak state small troubles assumed vast proportions. And to whom, with the quick sensitiveness that Margaret had, would not a difference of opinion even, between her and one to whom she owed a large debt of gratitude, have caused disquietude and distress?

And a difference of opinion, nay, a painful coldness, had suddenly sprung up between Margaret and her friend.

The cause was apparently not far to seek. Margaret, finding all attempts vain at inducing her friend to countenance and further her return to England, and feeling that duty demanded of her at any sacrifice of comfort or inclination to go back to the children, at length resolved that she must act for herself.

"I have been weak too long," she said to herself, as her white lips compressed themselves into a look as near obstinacy as her soft wistful eyes would allow of. And then she had sat down and written the letter just quoted to Philippine.

Mrs. Armytage was writing in the drawing-room when Margaret entered with her closed letter in her hand. Margaret stooped and laid her thin cheek against that of her friend.

"I *must* go," she said, softly. "You would not help me, so I have had to settle it for myself."

"Oh!" replied Mrs. Armytage, drily. "And what day do you propose starting?"

"Thursday," said Margaret, her knees shaking under her, for she was too weak as yet to bear the slightest excitement of feeling.

"Very well; Lightfoot shall pack for you. Perhaps you will kindly give her your orders."

Margaret sat down on a sofa by the window, and the tears welled into her eyes. She was too choked to speak, and silence there was for half an hour, only interrupted by the scratch, scratch, of Mrs. Armytage's pen.

A dream is said to occupy but a few instants of time. No wonder Margaret in that silent half-hour had time for a dream as long as life itself. She had a way of going back with a mournful pleasure to days gone by, fingering the well-conned rosary of years and days, each bead fraught with so much distress, so much of care, and so little sunshine in between. Here she sat to-day in Rome and questioned her own soul. She was out of favour with the friend to whom she owed her life; she was leaving Rome with its enchantment and its associations of pleasure and of congenial companionship. Above all, she was leaving Gaspar in a foreign grave.

She was still weak enough to cry in womanish fashion over trifles, weak enough to dread the journey alone, weak enough to wish the day of parting over. And seeing these many cares and drawbacks in the course she had resolved upon, what of attraction is there in it to be set against them? The children, and perhaps Philippine. But then with the children she must take up fresh burdens as well as pleasures. The sight of Philippine would arouse the most painful of

memories; perhaps Philippine's own face might be a source of grief to Margaret, for how did she know what tale that face would tell?

Margaret questioned herself, I say. We have a right to hear her verdict, I think. "Are you happy, Margaret, or unhappy?"

The answer comes, "Happy."

Now we might be curious, and beg to analyse her thoughts, to furrow up the soil and find the cause. Here we have no right at all. Margaret's eyes have told us all she means them to tell. If they tell any more—then please move away, and look at the beggars in the convent garden.

Do you ever think how blessed you are in being able to look at all? Do you ever think what it must be to be a Mr. Palgrave in a world of darkness of your own?

For Mr. Palgrave is blind. There is no mystery about it that it should be hidden. You have guessed it long ago perhaps from his clinging dependence to his friend, from various little signs that first broke the suspicion to Margaret and to Mrs. Armytage, though many days passed before the suspicion became a truth.

"He is blind," whispered Jack Williams, shaping his lips into the words rather than forming any sounds, on the second day of their acquaintance when Mrs. Armytage had unwittingly directed his attention to a picturesque group of these very beggars you are, or ought to be, looking at now.

It was no wonder they had not discovered it at first. That his eyes were weak they had seen, but he had paid his first visit late on an

afternoon by twilight, and sitting with his back to the light, the awfully still and constant look of a blind man's eyes had escaped the notice of both the ladies.

Afterwards they had heard his story from Jack Williams.

He had distinguished himself at Oxford, taking a first class in classics, and in law and history. The only son of his mother, and she a widow, he had devoted all his energies as much to her comfort and satisfaction as to the darling pursuits of study. But his health had never been good, and before he had gone in for his last examination he felt that his eyes were giving way.

"I loved ambition better than the gifts of God," he said to Jack once, "and I satisfied one by sacrificing the other. I did it with my eyes open," he said with a mournful smile, "and now I must not complain that they are shut."

When Margaret first discovered Mr. Palgrave's loss it affected her very painfully. Blindness had for her an overpowering dread that was almost horror. Blindness in a man who was a young man still, filled her with an unspeakably great compassion, while the awe that it at first inspired in her amounted almost to repulsion.

She said something of this to Jack Williams, but not till she could tell him that constant intercourse with Mr. Palgrave had entirely removed the childish prejudice.

"For God's sake don't let him know that," he replied, "for strangely enough he has himself the idea that his blindness makes him repulsive. He is so little used to it that it is a very tender

subject too; I never mention it unless he does so first. He will never talk to you of it, however, so there is no fear of your committing yourself by telling him what your first feelings towards him were."

"It was not towards *him*," said Margaret hastily; "it was the blindness itself that repelled me. It is an odd feeling that I cannot account for. Do you know my strongest association with St. Mark's, at Venice, is that of a blind man whom I saw led in by a friend, just as you lead Mr. Palgrave. I was five years old then; my father had taken us to Venice. This man stood up erect against the wall as motionless as a statue. The crowd surged round him. The organ rolled, fresh faces were always passing and repassing. Now and then he felt nervously with his fingers about his coat, as if the darkness were quite new to him. Now and then he moved his hand a little, as if to make quite sure that he was master at least of that.

"I crept closer to my father, but my eyes refused to leave the spot to which they were riveted. I suppose it was the helplessness of the man in strange conjunction with an unusually powerful frame that impressed my child's imagination, but still more, I think, the awful constancy of his fixed gaze as he towered there over the moving mass of people."

After a little further conversation about Mr. Palgrave, in which Jack Williams poured out his grateful soul and his intense love and respect for his friend to Margaret's attentive ear, she asked—

"Is there any hope of his recovery?"

"He has given up all hope. At least he says so, and I think it is as well."

This was all but a few days after the acquaintanceship had been formed. Later, though Jack Williams was never weary of praising and referring to his friend, the conversation became more and more one-sided. Margaret did not encourage the subject, though she listened. It is a great pity if she has let that foolish prejudice about the blindness return again, to become master of her better sense.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Two days before Margaret left Rome, she was sitting very wearied and disconsolate in her empty room, the contents of her rickety Roman cupboard strewn on the floor, and the poor battered little square trunk gaping to receive them. She had not done more than lay a few books in the bottom of the box when her aching back compelled her to rest for a moment. Mrs. Armytage's maid was to fold the scanty little wardrobe, but there was a desk, some papers, and some books, which Margaret did not care to trust to other hands than her own.

When she had recovered herself, and had put in the remainder of her treasures, she threw open her window and looked out.

The next day was Christmas-day. In England

there must be deep snow, holly, and fires, or that green, moist, grey Christmas-tide, with the shadow of its sad saying about "fat churchyards." How different here! Blue sky, a hot sun, open carriages, flowers—everything suggestive of peace and goodwill, but not of yule logs or old associations. Rome is astir, foreigners have flocked to her for the great festival. The Pifferari, who have played since Advent began to every madonna at every street corner, are ending their tuneful jubilee; to-morrow no one will listen to them. The silver trumpets will empty Rome's streets to fill her St. Peter.

Margaret, standing at her window, was thinking of all this, and watching a group of men playing "Morro" in the street below. Due! Tre! Quattro! Tutti! they kept calling, in a shrill, biting cry, beneath the overhanging boughs of an ilex. A footstep or footsteps on the landing of their own "*étage*" called her attention from the window. She had a way now of listening to footsteps—perhaps fevers leave such effects upon the nerves. Several voices were speaking, luggage was being carried up and put down heavily on the ground.

"Margaret Marshall leaves on Thursday, and then you can have her room," said Mrs. Armytage, quite distinctly.

"Please let me wash my hands and face," was the answer. "I feel a ruffian."

Poor Luke Carew! you are quite right to wash your hands and face. You will need all the assistance that you can lend yourself or that others will give you.

So he had come. There had been hints of it

several times. "He may come any day," Margaret had overheard his sister saying to some friend, though since the coolness had sprung up between the two women, Luke had been passed over in complete silence.

Margaret put on her bonnet and shawl and prepared to go out, for the first time alone. Would it look like cowardice, or affectation, or emotion? Perhaps. But she was not coward enough to sacrifice her inclination to what people might say or think. "And," said Margaret, hardening herself as she drew her shawl tighter round her and went quietly down the long stone stairs "what *can* it matter what Mr. Carew thinks?"

She found the Corso too crowded to be pleasant, and made, as quickly as her weak limbs would allow of, for the Doria Gallery. It was sweet to breathe the fresh air of heaven; and a certain sense of freedom came back to her as she stepped along alone—for she had lost her freedom, of this she was quite certain. Was it good? She knew it. Was it pleasant? She was not sure. Only she drew her shawl yet closer, and said to herself that it was sweet to be alone.

A few moments saw her seated in one of the rooms of the great gallery, people passing to and fro before her, but her eyes and soul absorbed in the great works that held her attention, and even prevented her from seeing and dilating on the hay, straw, and stubble, which abound in Roman galleries as elsewhere.

She had taken a quiet window-seat opposite some picture that fascinated her, when her view was obscured by two figures, who coming in by

one door were passing through, with their backs turned towards her, to the other. But the same picture which had attracted her seemed to interest them; and, as they paused, she recognised Jack Williams and Mr. Palgrave. The surprise brought a little colour to her face, perhaps. But then she is very weak still, and that is nothing. But, unlike herself, Margaret did not at once stand up and offer a greeting. An instant later, when she had thought better of it and was about to do so, a lady, to Margaret's surprise, joined the two friends.

Mr. Palgrave held out his hand, and feeling for hers, while his sightless eyes turned towards her, he drew her arm within his own.

"Now," Margaret could hear him say, in his patient, calm voice, "read the picture to me. Your eyes ought to be able to tell me the story well."

"It is a St. Agnes," said Jack Williams, and then he proceeded to describe the picture. After which the lady at his right side did likewise, but coloured her word-painting with a true poetry of her own.

"Can you see it now?" she asked.

Mr. Palgrave drew her hand closer to his side, and laid his own upon it as his answer.

"You are not cold in here?" he asked, tenderly. And those sad eyes, turned upon her, showed themselves in part to Margaret too. She could not bear to see blind eyes, you know. That must be why her face has changed in the last moments since we have been looking at the picture.

"I can show you it better," said Jack Williams, smiling, "by telling you who it is like."

"Who?" asked Mr. Palgrave quickly.

"Margaret—Miss Marshall—it is her face on canvas. I have always thought her like a saint—like a St. Agnes, too, only with more power, much more power."

"I should like to see her," said the lady. "I am jealous of this Margaret." And as she spoke, her tall, delicate figure turned itself half round, and Margaret saw a beautiful face under a thin black veil, eyes full of sorrow, and the sweetest and smallest of mouths playing with a gentle smile.

And then the three passed from the room, and Margaret was left with her St. Agnes.

When she thought of it afterwards she could not tell why she had sat there stupid and motionless. Why had she listened to what they had said of her? Why had she not at least left the room? But it had all passed in a moment. She knew nothing, except that an unconquerable dread of being surprised and spoken to just then had possessed her.

When she got home she was given a card. It bore the name of Mr. Pickering. He would call again at four o'clock.

"And luncheon is ready, Margaret," said Mrs. Armytage in a tone more amiable than it had been for days past, "and my brother Luke has come."

Which were the most distasteful of the two, Luke or luncheon, it was difficult to say.

"Oh, child!" said Mrs. Armytage again, when

the trio so ill at ease sat down to their light luncheon of fruit, maccaroni, and wine—"how tired you look! What have you been doing with yourself—and how do you think you are to start on Thursday?"

Margaret smiled. But grapes and oranges lay untouched on her plate, and she acknowledged that though she had sat nearly all the morning in the gallery she was a good deal tired.

"We have a plan for St. Peter's and all manner of churches to-night," said Mrs. Armytage, kindly. "And I did so wish for you to be fresh and able for it."

Margaret said she should be quite able, though her looks belied her words.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Four o'clock came, and with it Mr. Pickering.

His meeting with Margaret was of so affectionate a character that Luke Carew frowned a little, in spite of himself, as he left them together.

"My dear! my dear!" Mr. Pickering kept saying, wringing her hand in his elephantine clasp, and really moved too much for his usual rough speech and manner. He recovered himself very shortly, however, and was the veritable Joshua once more.

"Poor dear! poor dear!" he ejaculated once, when Margaret's eyes filled with tears as he alluded to their last meeting. She had not seen him more than twice or three times in her life,

and yet the unmistakable warmth of friendship came into the room with him.

"Well, miss," he continued when he felt better, and the tears had fallen into Margaret's lap; "well, and I propose to be so impertinent as to ask what your plans are. Where do you propose setting up shop when you get back to the old place across the Channel?"

Margaret said sorrowfully she had no plans, further than her intention of returning to the cottage at Fernhill.

"*Fernhill! cottage!* stuff and nonsense, miss! Excuse me for saying so, but this is all sham and make-believe. You ain't really set upon *that* plan, I believe you. Not you!—oh! no."

And Mr. Pickering burst into a loud guffaw, and threw himself heavily back in the armchair, which creaked ominously, and showed symptoms of Roman decay.

Margaret looked at him bewildered and astonished.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Now," said he, "I'm pretty fairly up to womanish dodges, that I am, having had some small experience with one Mrs. P. But I reckon they beat me sometimes, 'specially women with saintly faces. Whether they're speaking truth, or working on a poor chap's feelings, I ain't at liberty to guess. But what I mostly goes in for is, making for the point. And when I asks a straight question there isn't one woman out of fifty has the moral what-d'ye-call-it to tell a lie! With your leave, miss," and he bent forward, and peered into Margaret's face, "I'm going to

ask a question now of you; and as I'm interested in the concern, perhaps you'll do me the kindness to reply. Have I your leave?"

"Certainly," said Margaret, unhesitatingly.

"Well, then," and he drew his chair till his knees almost touched Margaret's, while he lowered his voice to a confidential whisper (he could not whisper, and it ended in a hoarse falsetto). "Do you mean to set up for yourself, or do you mean to enter into partnership?"

"I don't understand," she replied.

"To be plainer, miss, have you forsworn the single state and art together; and are you going in for matrimony, money, and the domestic hearth?"

Margaret fairly laughed. It was so long since she had done so, that the sound of her own laughter saddened her again. She sighed, and assured Mr. Pickering that she had no idea of abjuring either her art or the single state.

Mr. Pickering gave a long peculiar whistle through his thick lips, and his great eyebrows contracted. The whistle implied satisfaction; the contraction, of course, suggested a drawback or a difficulty.

"Poor chap! poor chap!" he muttered between his teeth.

Then there was a silence, while he patted his great foot on the ground, and ran his huge hand through the mop of grizzly hair that crowned him.

Presently he looked up, set his jaw resolutely, and said,

"Miss Marshall!"

"Yes, Mr. Pickering."

"The Almighty has his system of compen-

Margaret.

sations—Carew loses; art and Joshua Pickering win. Will you be led by me in the matter of this art? I ain't a polished scholar, and I ain't a poet, but I've climbed out of the dunghill along of this art of mine, and I think I can help you too. My dear," said he, softening his voice to a tone Margaret had never heard in it before, and holding out his hand for hers, "my dear—no offence I hope—I want to help you. You ain't too proud to learn the way?"

"Not too proud, I hope," she answered, "to learn to help *myself*."

"The genteel blood! Oh, lor!—that genteel blood! Thank the stars, there ain't none of it *here*, Joshua P.," and he dug into one of the veins of his brown hand with the forefinger of the other. "Not that I proposed otherwise, miss. I weren't a-going to offer you an annuity, nor to assist you into the Lambeth Union, nor to send you round with a hat to-morrow in St. Peter's."

"You are always kind, Mr. Pickering," said Margaret. "I know you would not make an unworthy proposal to me. Tell me what I must do, for, indeed, I want help." And she raised her large mournful eyes to his.

He looked away directly; nay, he turned his very chair round. "For goodness sake, don't look so! My pocket's got turned, and the port-money in it. And now, miss, before you see so ungenteel a thing as gold, and hear the vulgar click of coin, let me tell you that you've started helping *yourself*. One, two, three, four, five," and he counted out forty sovereigns upon the table.

"You ain't going to 'go off,' I hope, miss? Not while I'm alone in here, if you please—might look odd and out of place—"

"I never faint," said Margaret disdainfully, forgetting that swoon at Munich she had indeed hardly known of, with tears pouring down her thin cheeks. "How have I earned this? Is it a dream? What does it mean, Mr. Pickering?"

"It means you painted a picture in your dreams," said Joshua, with a half-bacchanalian grin of delight at her astonishment and emotion; "it means I came and took it away while you slept; it means 'a sleep of sorrow and a dream of joy;' it means a picture of a child's head that's sold to a connoisseur; the artist one Margaret Marshall. It means, my dear, forty pounds sterling!" And arriving at that tremendous climax of his eloquence, Mr. Pickering wiped his forehead and was silent.

"And now," he resumed, while Margaret smiled through her tears and fingered the pieces, making little broken exclamations of gratitude and astonishment all the while, "I have a plan to propose, Miss Marshall, upon which I beg your consideration for one whole day. If you come to the conclusion I come to, you will not make the train to Civita Vecchia heavier on Thursday. You'll stay in Rome."

"That is impossible," she replied, decidedly.

"Indeed!" said Joshua, ironically.

"What is your plan?" she asked.

"That you study in Rome—that you take a studio here in Rome."

"That is impossible!" she cried again incredulously.

"Indeed, miss! Well, I'm sorry—most sorry to find you ain't so large-minded as I took you for. It's narrow minds, I guess, that ain't got no room for possibilities. But I'll say good morning, miss, as my mission ain't as successful as I might wish.

"Fare thee well, and if for ever——"

"Don't be angry, Mr. Pickering," pleaded Margaret. "You don't know of my difficulties. What can I do with the children?"

"Children! children! Bother the nasty children! People meaning to hook it oughtn't to leave a legacy of children to the world. Beg your pardon, miss. No offence, I hope. Bring them here, of course, at once. Send for them, I mean. Send for them! I'll telegraph! I'll write! I'll write six letters; so that one of the six has a good chance of escaping the old papa's fingers. Five for the post-office is a handsome allowance, eh? I'll blow up the cardinals! I'll prophesy the downfall of Papery—Popery, I mean! It'll take 'em a week to read the five. Meantime, what with the smoke of burning 'em, and the bother of reading 'em, the sixth'll make his way to England, and you needn't go. You ain't fit to travel; you know you ain't." And Mr. Pickering opened his snuff-box and absorbed an unusually large pinch.

"That I must go home I know," said Margaret, quietly. "Whether it would be possible for me to come back to Rome and follow your advice, that is such a weighty question for a lonely woman like me, that you must give me time to answer it. Shall I see you in St. Peter's to-night?"

"O, yes! Pastorelly, or something, eh?"

"Yes, it begins about ten or eleven o'clock. I am going there instead of to high mass to-morrow. I will tell you then, if I can, what my 'possibilities' are. You must not despise me if I am less large-hearted than you, Mr. Pickering."

And with a hearty shake of the hand, or hands, they parted. •

CHAPTER XL.

Very few people go to St. Peter's on Christmas-eve, for the greater part of Rome reserves itself for high mass the next day.

All the more peaceful and impressive, therefore, is the long vigil in the beautiful, silent place.

There are no lights, save in the chapel on the left-hand side, where the Pastorale, the Song of the Shepherds, is being sung. This light, in a pale flood, streams out into the dim aisles, and lights up the faces of the few who stand beside the entrance: priests, with books, joining the choir within, Zouaves leaning against some marble monument, a good many foreigners, chiefly English and American, who have come to see, if not to understand.

There is a group of these whom we must look at for a moment. They are standing to the right of the chapel, the full light falling on their features. A blind man with a grand face and brow, sightless blue eyes looking constantly onwards, a

mouth with the smile of a child playing upon it; but that firm look of patient resolve there too, so utterly unchildlike. Is he listening to the music, drinking in its harmonies, that his face is so holy and so calm? I think he must hear sweeter melodies than these—soul-melodies surging up, clashing with the Pastorale into melodious discords, carrying him quite above St. Peter's and the towering dome.

The great clock booms twelve! and then the Pastorale verily begins; for Christmas morning dawns upon old earth again.

The blind man becomes a little restless. Can it be the change in the music, the clear ring of the shepherds' pipes breaking through the roll of the organ? He puts out his hand and feels round him. He speaks his friend's name; but Jack Williams has left him since we looked, and is wandering now round the tomb of the apostle at the further end.

Mr. Palgrave sighs, leans back against the wall once more, and throws his head up with an expression of pain. He moves his childlike lips; it seems as if he might be saying something between a prayer and a muffled moan of misery.

He starts suddenly, for his hand is touched.

"Even my ears are useless to me," he says to Mrs. Armytage sadly, for it is she who has touched him. And in his heart he adds, "I have been looking for you a long while past." But this not to Mrs. Armytage.

They stand there for half an hour, a silent group. Luke Carew beside Margaret, dangling an officious camp-stool in his hand, and trying

to look at her face, which she turns from him; Mrs. Armytage, talking animatedly to Mr. Palgrave, rather more than he seems to care for; the organ rolling, the shepherds' pipes waxing loud and jubilant, the Zouave falling asleep over his folded arms.

"Is that poor Palgrave, Miss Marshall?" Luke inquires timidly.

"It is Mr. Palgrave," says Margaret drily. She is getting terribly tired of standing, yet she will not take the dangling camp-stool and gratify poor Luke. She would like to walk about and change her position, but she knows the mournful shadow and the dangling appendage will come after her. She knew now she had never loved Luke Carew. She felt that to-night her indifference had become dislike. Why was he here, why did he intrude on her and her thoughts—"this last night!" she kept saying to herself, "this last night!" And yet it was not her last night in *Rome*.

Mr. and Mrs. Pickering arrived in St. Peter's about one o'clock. "Where's the 'Pastorelly,' if you please, Monsuire?" she inquired, arranging her disconcerted locks on either side her face, and addressing a young German priest, who shook his head solemnly and passed on to kiss (what remains of) St. Peter's toe.

"Où est-ce que je peut trouverai le Pastorelly, Monsuire?" she tried next, but with better success. Her informant called it the "Pastorelly" too, and pointed out the chapel.

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Half-past five. St. Peter's still. The Pastorale

still. The dawn is creeping in, and all the faces are weary and haggard.

"When is it to be?" asks Mrs. Armytage of a lady beside her. It is the same lady who joined Mr. Palgrave and Jack Williams in the Doria gallery.

"Not for a year: he is to be under the doctors at Kissingen during the summer. The oculist returns to Rome every winter, and if Francis is well enough, please God, it will be tried by January twelvemonths."

"The operation, you mean?"

"Yes: he is not strong enough now. His health has never recovered the fever."

"And he lost his sight then?"

"Yes. Three years ago. Three years ago last August. Congestion followed the fever; the oculist thinks that congestion is the sole cause of his blindness. The operation, if it is successful, will remove that."

"Is he very anxious about the result?"

"Very. He has been more anxious than ever lately. He does not seem as resigned to his blindness as he used to be." The lady paused, and then said, as a sudden after-thought, "Is Miss Marshall here? Will you introduce me?"

At that moment Margaret was standing apart: she had wearied out even Luke's patience for a while. A short time before, upon looking round she had noticed the beautiful woman in black whom she had seen in the Doria gallery. Margaret had not spoken much that night, but now she drew farther away still, and stood in the shadow alone. "Who is that?" she asked Jack

Williams with so apparent an effort that he thought she was ill, and offered to take her home.

"That is Mrs. Palgrave," he answered. "Is she not beautiful? Are you sure you are not cold? or tired? Will you let me take you home?"

"I think I will go home presently, I am a little cold," said Margaret shivering, and drawing her shawl closer.

And as she stood waiting for Jack Williams to go and tell Mrs. Armytage, the latter and the lady in black came towards her.

As they drew near, the chapel lights fell like moonshine on every white straight feature of Mrs. Palgrave's face. But they showed it to Margaret as she had never seen it before. She was not a young woman after all: the complexion, whose whiteness and fineness, together with her erect figure and perfect features, had given her at first sight a look of youth, was after all a little furrowed, had lost the soft freshness of early womanhood.

"This is our friend Mr. Palgrave's mother, Margaret, who wishes to know you," said Mrs. Armytage.

At six o'clock or sooner, St. Peter's began filling for high mass at nine. Veiled ladies were moving to and fro, and taking their "reserved places" with looks of silent satisfaction.

Mrs. Pickering too began her part, railing at the unfortunate Joshua for having neglected to give her a veil.

"It's not decent, Pickering, and you knows it well enough. Respectable women coming here to be a-stared at by them nasty priests. There,

do stand between me and them, can't you! Don't you see that horrid shaven-head looking at me? But *you* don't care, not you! Oh no! you don't care!"

"Bless you, woman!" returned Joshua, "as if, for the matter of staring, we don't stare much more when the pretty dears are got up like that! I'm just conceiving a mural study, my dear, 'St. Peter's on Christmas morning'—ladies veiled—monks staring—Mrs. Pickering in the foreground."

"*Veiled*, Pickering?" she asked in a tone of genuine anxiety.

But Mr. Pickering was quoting Byron, and thinking how beautiful Margaret would look with a veil like that. He should make a study of that, and abandon the "mural" study after all.

Margaret waited for Mrs. Armytage, and by half-past six they were at home. Luke Carew did not return with them. He was last seen wringing his hands, thinking himself *unseen*, in a dark corner of St. Peter's.

"I see you dislike my brother," said Mrs. Armytage to Margaret as they drove home. "I am sorry, my dear, and I hope you may do better."

Margaret said, as best she could, that she was very sorry too. Who knows but she may have echoed the last wish also, and thought it possible?

Margaret's sleep was sweet and sound that night, and the night after too, though it was the last in Rome for her.

CHAPTER XLI.

"Not die; but live a life of truest health,
And teach true life to fight with mortal wrongs."
MAUD.

An uneventful year has passed over Margaret's head; Fernhill is still her home; the children and Elspet are, as before, her only companions.

Charlie and Dolly have grown, and added a year's wisdom to their strange sayings and doings. Rabbits were transplanted from the Towers, and are an endless source of amusement.

Sometimes they are dangled in pocket-handkerchiefs from the trees: especially upon windy days this recreation is allowed them.

"Children! children!" how can you be so cruel?" said Margaret, the first time.

"They *like* it, Aunt Marg'ret," said Charlie, scornfully. "Don't *we* like swinging?"

Elspet has been fibbing, and saving, and planning as busily as ever; Margaret's old dresses have come out furbished up and looking as new as mourning of a year's time can be made to look; and Margaret has been painting, painting, painting and caring about her clothes not at all.

Through the long summer days she stands or sits before that easel we have seen so often—drawing from nature, from the children playing beside her, or from memory. Sometimes it is a sketch of Rome from the Pincian Hill, the sea of roofs cunningly mystified in a soft sunset haze.

She has a pencil sketch of Jack Williams in a note-book, which she has shown to Ellen. It brought tears into those truthful but impassive

eyes. She has promised to try and open the way for his reception at home. When she and Margaret think the time has come, Margaret undertakes to bring the prodigal—for as such Ellen still looks upon him—to the father's arms. We have no fears at all for Jack Williams.

In the meantime things go badly in Fernhill parish. Little attempts at improvement are nipped in the bud; anything unusual is forbidden, under the most unusual circumstances; the rector meets cross looks at every turn, and cannot meet with a curate; irritated landladies say, "the very *rents* is gone down, all along o' the parson;" and poor unconscious little Ellen blames all the parish rather than her father, but is standing in the gap all the same.

"We do like the young lady, miss," the people would say to Margaret, while they filled her ear with complaints of the rector's hardness.

Jeanie Carter has gone over to the "Methodies" long ago. "It's my only chance of getting to the good place, miss," she says to Margaret "for parson he ain't a-going to show me in, that's certain."

Philippine has been twice to Fernhill, in spite of Elspet's stoutest endeavours to prevent the catastrophe; for who could tell how much of the truth would percolate to "the room," and how many of Elspet's stories would be proved against her? Margaret thinks Philippine more loveable and more lovely than ever. They talk now of past times without restraint, and it seems happiest for both. A certain dignity, almost grandeur, has come over Philippine of late. Only in Jack

Leslie's presence the demon of scorn and relentless persecution seizes her anew; but, like an india-rubber ball, he rebounds all the more for being crushed and trodden on. Margaret is always expecting to see the day when the final blow will be given, and there will be a collapse from which the poor ball will never recover.

Time is smoothing out the lines of care and sorrow from Margaret's face. People tell her she would be fat and fair once more if she worked less hard. But work she will; and painting after painting is finished and despatched. The Beauchamps have got several orders for her; and no wonder, for the first six weeks after Margaret's return were taken up in finishing Philippine's portrait. Mr. Beauchamp has offered her two hundred guineas for it; then one hundred; then fifty. But Margaret stoutly refused all payment, and by the time April had come round the finished picture was hanging in Mr. Beauchamp's study.

No wonder orders flow in to Margaret; for there is Philippine, with all the witchery of her beautiful face and manner, the sheen upon her glossy hair, the very trick of her lithe hand and tiny wrist, with the passion-flower between the long fingers. There she is, a little in shadow, all in a soft mist of gauzy white, the sunlight just kissing her here and there, just touching the passion-flowers falling around her, just illuminating their green leaves and showing out in lovely transparency its shape and delicate veins.

Miss Marshall has quite a style of her own, people are saying—"an atmosphere of herself," some one has remarked who knows her. And

who can wonder that, in spite of herself, Margaret is growing cheery, forgetting sad times now and then, as she should, learning at least to know what peace and hope mean?

And yet she has sad times too, and who can blame her?

“My Father! thou hast knowledge, only thou,
How dreary 'tis for women to sit still,

.

And hear the nations praising them far off,
Too far! ay, praising our quick sense of love,
Our very passionate heart of womanhood,
Which could not beat so in the verse without
Being present also in the unkissed lips,
And eyes undried because there's none to ask
The reason they grow moist.”

Margaret's soul did not beat out in verse, but surely it was poetry.

“Ay, ay, she's got a new power,” said Joshua Pickering, whistling over her latest paintings. “Wherever it's come from, it's a new power. One 'ud think she had been in love to see the passion in that face, eh? eh?” he soliloquised. “Instead of hardening herself into a Niobe, and scorning poor Carew. Niobe! that's a good notion for you, Joshua! Paint her as a Niobe for the next Academy! Done!” And he thumped his hand on the table while he broke into the “Quando a te lieta” of *Faust*, and put half the passion he had found in Margaret's “Juliet” into his,

“O *Margarita! O Margarita! oi ti saro fedele a nostri amor!*”

Margaret is to go out to Rome in the winter. A compromise has been made about the studio there. Tempted sorely as she is by the future which Mr. Pickering opens to her as the certain consequence of a year's study in the Eternal City, Margaret holds resolutely to her determination of neither risking the children's health by a summer or autumn in that climate, nor of leaving them behind her. Philippine, and even Mrs. Beauchamp, round whose heart Dolly had entwined herself firmly, have done all in their power to break her decision. They will take care of the children; they will send them out in the winter with Elspet to join Margaret at Rome. An elderly lady, a friend of Mr. Pickering, is waiting with open arms to receive her, while Margaret is to have a studio of her own in the next house, and her movements are to be quite independent.

"My darlings, I will never leave you again," says Margaret, after the hottest contest is over, taking a child on each knee, and laying her white face upon their rosy, dimpled cheeks. No one knows how hot this last contest has been; for it is between Margaret and herself—between a strong, passionate impulse over an open letter, and duty, whose voice has always been with her so troublesomely loud.

"Not even if you *die*, Aunt Marg'ret? You'll take us with you if you die, Aunt Marg'ret? There'll be just room for two to go with you, Aunt Marg'ret, won't there?"

"Or, if there isn't room for two there'd be room for *one*, Aunt Marg'ret? If there isn't

room, I could go with you, couldn't I? and then Dolly could come with Elspet, couldn't she?"

"Is the gate up there very wide, Aunt Marg'ret? There aren't any hurdles to keep us out, like in the field where all the cowslips grows? If there is, God's angels 'll knock 'em all down, Aunt Marg'ret, when they see you and me and Dolly coming in."

"Shall we go alone, children?" says Margaret, and her voice trembles a little as she speaks.

"Yes, yes, quite alone!—you and me and Dolly."

CHAPTER XLII.

"Let no one ask me how it came to pass."
MAUD.

There is a studio in Rome; and I beg your patience while I take you there. The uneventful year has passed: a year and a month have passed, and Margaret Marshall is standing up before her easel in Rome. She is painting Stella, the beautiful model from the Spanish steps.

She has been two hours standing so: two hours has Stella leaned over a broken balustrade and held up her tired arms to shade her eyes from a half-imaginary sun. How hard Margaret is to-day, she does not once think of Stella and her weariness: she is painting too fast and eagerly; too fast and eagerly for success.

Every moment she stops suddenly; lifts up her

white face; holds the brush almost rigidly in her fingers, then paints again faster than ever.

The studio is not like other studios at most times. Charlie and Dolly patter up and down, paint pictures, touch Margaret's colours, ask questions, or pull the silver pins out of Stella's hair. But to-day the children have been sent away almost impatiently. "I can't stand the noise," Margaret says to herself. And it seems verily as if the very sound of her brush upon the canvas were too much for her, so often she stops, and listens, and then paints again.

There are footsteps on the stairs at last. Margaret puts down her palette and brush softly, dismisses Stella without much ceremony, and throws up the window, till it rattles in its old creaking frame, and a priest below looks up to wonder at the noise.

The footsteps draw quite near. How slow they are! Surely now—now! Surely now! They are at the door. The handle—will it never turn?

It turns at last. Margaret moves a step forward. She draws a quick sharp breath; her lips part. "Death, or life?" they seem to ask, though they are motionless.

"Come, my dear," says a sweet voice we have heard before; "will you come?"

There is no answer. Margaret is pinning her black shawl across her breast, and the white fingers will hardly do her bidding.

It is done at last. The black bonnet is put on, and the ribbons tied. With a strange reaction she begins tidying the studio slowly and deliberately.

"Margaret! my dear!" says the sweet voice,

Margaret.

with a touch of half entreaty, half reproach. Margaret puts down the easel mechanically, and allows her hand to be drawn into another hand.

They go down the long broad stair without speaking. Into the street without speaking. How long the stair is—how long the street is! Will they never see the end?

They come to the end without speaking. They have reached a flight of steps. Margaret strikes her foot against the lowest step, and passes her hand before her eyes. Her guide pauses. They go up. The great door is open. A waiter is standing by the door. He is whistling "*Giovanettin che passi per la via!*" but he stops, bows and moves out of the way as the two women approach.

It seems to Margaret that a black object has been moved out of her path; she knows not whether it be man or mountain.

They ascend a long stair. Another long stair. How long these Roman stairs must be! They cross a long passage. Margaret's guide pauses, turns a handle, opens a door.

An empty room is before them. Margaret is staring fixedly before her, opening her eyes as if sight had gone from her, and motionless as death.

Oh, God, how long thy moments can be! Hours, days, weeks—you are nothing to such moments. Eternity must be an endless moment, that knows no measurement, no counting, no name.

There is a folding door half open at the other side the room. The little light that comes from it is soft and dim.

A few steps across the room; a wild fighting

with the thick mist before her eyes; a fierce effort to reach something, some one, looming out there—there—a few feet from her, and not yet reached.

Then there is a low soft cry. A sound that in this place of dreams may be the folding of an angel's wings. No more.

Margaret's guide has passed back into the other room. We will go with her. She has fallen on her knees and is calling for blessings upon her children, thrice blessed. Bless them too, all who have ever grieved for Margaret or have had patience with the story of her griefs.

"Her children," Mrs. Palgrave says. Be it so. "Heaviness may endure for a night: joy cometh in the morning."

An hour passes. How short an hour can be! how short, and how long!

Is it the same hour, think you, to the little waiter on the steps below who has stopped "Giovanettin" to carol of "Nennella"?—the same as to those two above in the darkened chamber, who have come to love, to sight, to bliss unspeakable within this blessed hour?

Into that blessedness none but the faces of their angels in heaven may peer.

Enough be it for us to know that the consummation of all that hope has held out for a year gone by is theirs to-day. He would not speak till he should know whether God would touch and open the dimmed eyes: and yet without word or message she had guessed the truth, and loved and waited.

They are strong now, to live, to love, to work.

Riches, do you ask, poor worldling? Yes, they have riches; God-given riches, faith, hope, love, trust.

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"I knew you were beautiful, Margaret," Francis Palgrave says solemnly, feasting his eyes that have won away to themselves the child-smile from his lips upon the white face hanging like a lily after storm beside him,—“but I did not think you were so sad to look upon.”

“You will teach me,” she answers, lifting her head, “you know I am learning to be happy.”

“Thank God who makes me teacher!” he said solemnly, and then there was another silence for a space, as in heaven.

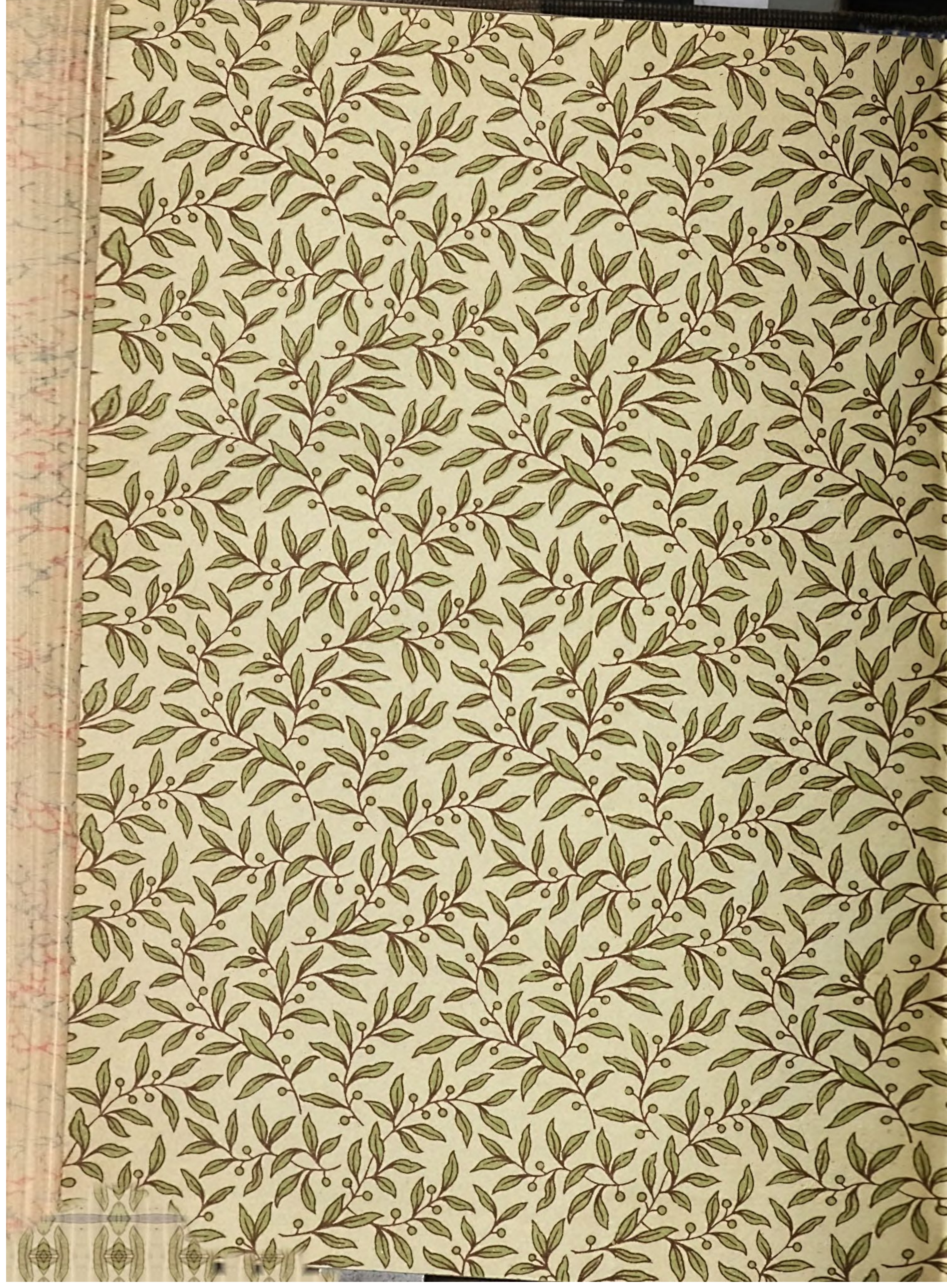
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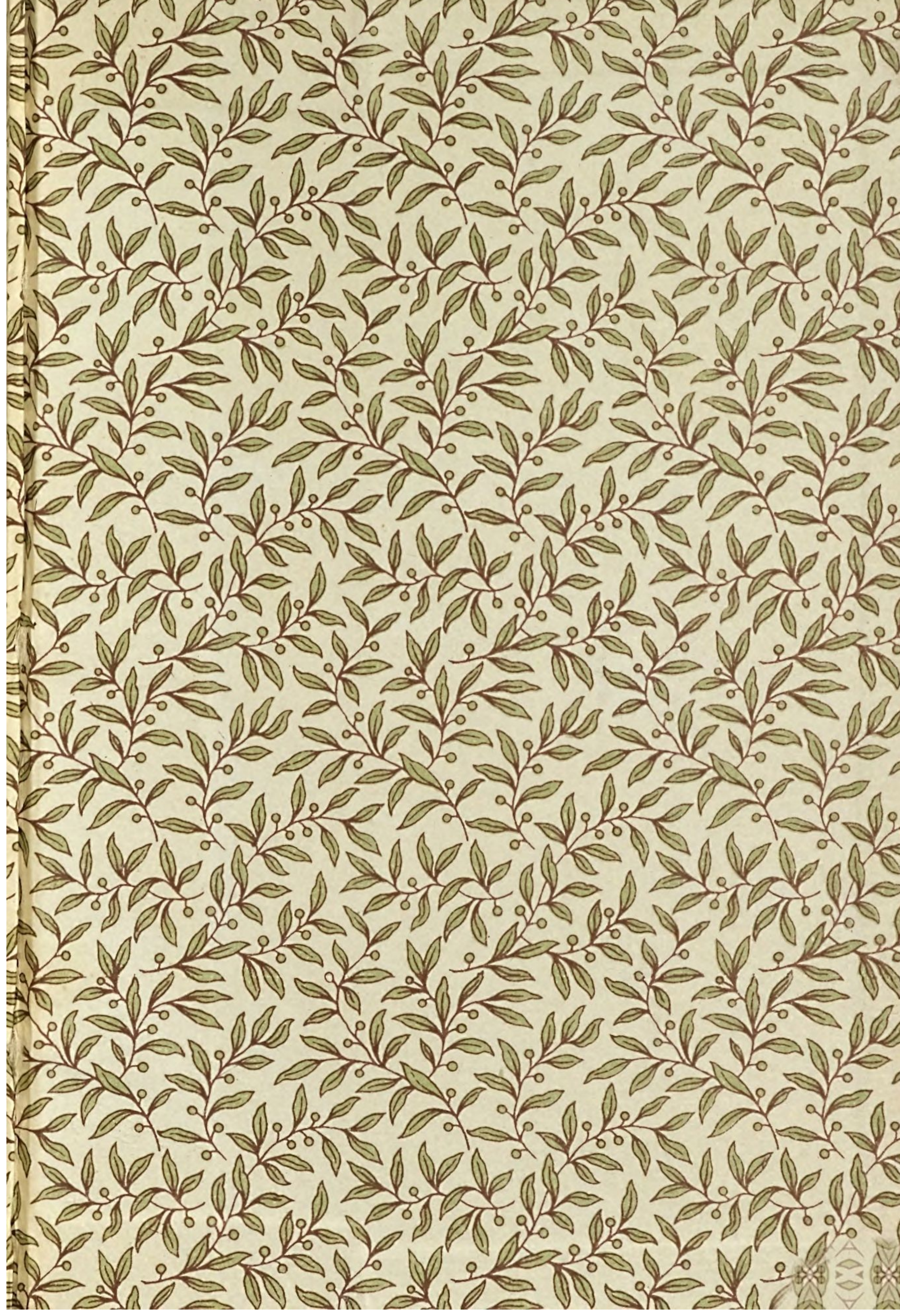
“Children!” said Margaret, calling them to her one day soon after, “there is one wants to come to heaven with us—may he come?”

“Yes, Aunt Marg’ret!—him, and me, and you, and Dolly.”

“Amen!” said Francis Palgrave, who was standing by.

THE END.





Fraser-Tytler, C. C.

Margaret

Berlin 1873

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